

NEBRASKA'S APPLICATION FOR READING FIRST

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About Nebraska – An Introduction

Geographically, Nebraska starts in the east with fertile river valleys and wooded bluffs. It ends in the west with semi-arid grasslands and the towering buttes that stood as mile markers for travelers on the Oregon Trail. Among the 50 states, Nebraska ranks 15th in area but 38th in population. More than 50% of its 1.6 million people live in the two urban areas near its eastern border, while fewer than 20% of Nebraskans reside in the western two-thirds of the state. Between these boundaries lives a citizenry as guarded of its independence and as industrious as those early travelers. Some Nebraskans are descendants of those who transformed what was once characterized as the Great American Desert into one of the most agriculturally productive areas in the world.

This independence translates into the desire to maintain local control, especially in our local school districts. Nebraska's educational system divides the state's 93 counties into 527 public school districts, 224 private school districts and 18 regional Educational Service Units (ESUs). The three largest districts, Omaha, Lincoln, and Millard, enroll 20% of the students. Only 40 of the state school districts (4%) have more than 1000 students. Of the smaller districts, 240 have fewer than 20 students, including 70 one-room school districts with one teacher per district.

In Nebraska, there is no statewide curriculum, and each district sets its own requirements for high school graduation. Nebraska is currently one of two states that do not have statewide mandated assessment. Nebraska's assessment system, STARS (**S**chool-based **T**eacher-led **A**ssessment and **R**eporting **S**ystem), is unique in the country in its validation of local expertise and leadership while holding schools accountable to meet rigorous quality criteria.

In comparing student achievement with other states, Nebraska students have traditionally ranked highly among the 50 states and have graduated at higher percentages. But as other states continue to work toward higher academic achievement, we cannot assume that our place is secure. According to the Nebraska Commissioner of Education, Douglas D. Christensen, "Good is not good enough when better is expected and needed."

Nebraska is constantly striving to improve schools through research and proven programs paired with effective staff development practices. Reading First provides for both.

Nebraska's Standards and Assessment System

In order to thoroughly understand Nebraska's Reading First application, it is critical to first understand Nebraska's unique standards and assessment system.

Nebraska Standards – L.E.A.R.N.S.

In 1998, the Nebraska State Board of Education adopted academic content standards for reading/writing/speaking/listening, mathematics, science, and social studies/history. These content standards are known as Nebraska L.E.A.R.N.S. (Leading Educational Achievement through Rigorous Nebraska Standards).

During the 2000 session, the Nebraska Legislature passed LB 812 that established the requirements and general procedures for the implementation of standards, assessment, and accountability reporting for public school districts in Nebraska.

Nebraska's LB 812 requires all school districts to adopt measurable, quality academic content standards at the local level for reading/writing, mathematics, science, and social studies/history by July 1, 2003. The quality academic content standards adopted by Nebraska school districts may be those approved by the State Board of Education (Nebraska L.E.A.R.N.S.), or they may be locally developed school district standards that are determined to be equal to or more rigorous than the state standards. Locally developed content standards must be submitted to the State Board of Education for review and approval.

Nebraska school districts have aligned their local curriculum with the state approved content standards in order to ensure learning opportunities for all students. Each school district documents the local curriculum and standards alignment process in a portfolio of standards and assessment procedures for each content area. Not only are school districts required to describe and outline their process for aligning the standards with the local curriculum, they are required to document that students have had the opportunity to learn that content.

The purpose of aligning Nebraska's rigorous content standards with local curriculum is to establish standards-based classrooms within all Nebraska school districts. When aligned with local curriculum, the content standards are used to establish clear learning targets and expectations for all students within all classrooms. Standards-based classrooms are achieved as each teacher clearly articulates the learning targets, aligns instruction to the learning targets

within each of the content standards, and accurately assesses whether or not students are meeting the targets outlined by the content standards.

Nebraska's Assessment System – STARS Assessment System

The Nebraska state assessment system is called STARS (**S**chool-based **T**eacher-led **A**ssessment and **R**eporting **S**ystem). The underlying philosophy that supports Nebraska's STARS emphasizes a partnership between local school districts and the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE). STARS includes a statewide trait-based writing assessment, norm-referenced assessments conducted annually within each of the following grade spans (grades 3-5, 6-9, and 10-12), and assessments of content standards in reading/writing, mathematics, science and social studies/history.

Nebraska school districts are required to locally assess rigorous content standards (either Nebraska L.E.A.R.N.S. or locally developed standards). Decisions about student performance on standards are kept at the local classroom level providing a balance between state level guidance and local decision-making. School districts may use a combination of assessments to measure the standards, including norm-referenced tests, criterion-referenced assessments, or locally-developed classroom assessments. Regardless of the assessments selected, school districts must document that their assessments meet the ***Six Quality Assessment Criteria*** that have been established for the state of Nebraska:

Nebraska's Six Quality Assessment Criteria

1. **Match and measure the standards.** Districts must determine that the assessment used measures the standards and that students have sufficient opportunity to demonstrate their ability to meet the standard.
2. **Provide opportunity for students to have learned the content.** Districts must have examined their own local curriculum to determine that the opportunity to meet the standards exists within the local district's curriculum and that instruction on the standards occurs at an appropriate time in relationship to assessment.
3. **Be free of bias.** Districts must examine the assessment to be sure that any of the items or tasks are free of bias and are not insensitive to any group or circumstance.
4. **Be written at the appropriate level.** Districts must examine the assessment items or tasks in order to determine that the expectations are appropriate for the assessed grade level.

5. **Be reliable and consistently scored.** Districts must document that they can have confidence in the results of the assessment, that assessment results have produced an appropriate level of reliability, .70 or higher.
6. **Have appropriate mastery levels.** Districts must describe the systematic way they have determined achievement performance levels for the assessment, including both professional judgment and actual student results.

In a multi-step assessment review process, all school districts are required to submit plans that outline the assessment procedures they will use during the current year. The Nebraska Department of Education then reviews the assessment plans and provides feedback. During the course of the school year, each school district implements their plan.

At the end of the academic year, school districts are required to report the student results on the content standards at four levels of achievement: advanced, proficient, progressing, and beginning. The Nebraska Department of Education provides a secure electronic website for reporting. Districts are required to complete reports that include all students, including students with disabilities and students learning the English language.

After districts have reported student achievement and the Department of Education has calculated results, the Department establishes statewide cut scores for student performance.

The Buros Center for Testing at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (see Appendix A), using the expertise of Nebraska educators from throughout the state, facilitates the process of establishing mastery levels. Mastery levels correspond to five rating classifications: Exemplary, Very Good, Good, Acceptable but Needs Improvement, and Unacceptable. Each school district receives a student performance rating for each of the grade levels assessed and reported.

The assessment chosen by each Nebraska school district to measure student achievement on standards must be of high quality. In order to assure this high quality, each school district is required to submit a District Assessment Portfolio of their assessment instruments. The Nebraska Department of Education, with assistance from the Buros Center for Testing reviews and evaluates the portfolios in order to determine whether or not they meet the Six Quality Assessment Criteria (listed above).

The evaluation process has two levels. The first level consists of a National Advisory Panel of established assessment experts who give guidance to the entire portfolio review process. This group of eight individuals, four from within Nebraska and four from outside the state, assist in training the portfolio reviewers, providing guidance to the assessment review process, and making the final determination of model assessment practices within the state.

The second level of evaluation is the review of the portfolios themselves. Sixteen portfolio reviewers, from both within the state of Nebraska and from outside of the state, are contracted to complete the portfolio examinations. These portfolio reviewers are assessment experts who use the Six Quality Assessment Criteria to examine the district portfolios and determine the quality of each district's assessment processes and procedures. After an initial training session, reviewers evaluate the portfolios annually and provide feedback and suggestions about how their local assessment processes can be improved. Districts also receive a rating for each portfolio submitted: Exemplary, Very Good, Good, Acceptable but Needs Improvement, or Unacceptable.

As the portfolio reviewers examine the District Assessment Portfolios, they also identify potential model assessment practices appropriate for replication in other school districts within Nebraska. These model practices are identified for all sizes and circumstances of school districts—large, medium, small, urban, and rural.

Prior to the release of the portfolio feedback information, the National Advisory Panel convenes and reviews the model assessment practices identified by the portfolio reviewers. The panel determines the most promising of those practices and makes a final selection of four model practices for each of the Six Quality Assessment Criteria. The Nebraska Department of Education notifies the Nebraska school districts of this model assessment recognition and disseminates the model assessment information to Nebraska school districts.

Nebraska students in grades 4, 8, and 11 also participate in a trait-based **statewide writing assessment** scheduled as follows:

2000-2001	Statewide Writing Assessment Pilot Implementation – Grades 4, 8, 11
2001-2002	Narrative writing – Grade 4
2002-2003	Descriptive writing - Grade 8
2003-2004	Persuasive writing – Grade 11

Nebraska teachers trained in trait-based writing score the statewide writing assessments. Each of the sites also scores a random sample of writing assessments to determine a mastery level representing a student's progress in meeting the writing standards. The Buros Center for Testing and an independent and externally contracted test-maker analyze the results and establish a mastery level. Once that mastery level has been statistically determined, Nebraska school districts receive both electronic and written reports about their students' achievement on the writing standards.

In addition to measuring student achievement on academic content standards in reading, writing, and mathematics, Nebraska school districts assess students with several national tests. These external tests serve to validate the results of district testing on standards. Districts administer a norm-referenced test at least once in the elementary grades, once in the middle grades, and once in high school. Additionally, districts participate in other national assessments including the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), and the American College Test (ACT). In all of these assessments, Nebraska students continue to score well, adding evidence to further support Nebraska students' success on content standards.

1. IMPROVING READING INSTRUCTION

1. a. Current Reading Initiatives and Identified Gaps

In 1995, the Nebraska State Board of Education adopted an official Board Policy Statement that emphasizes the five essential components of good reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension (see Appendix B). The policy statement, approved on December 8, 1995, reads:

“Effective reading/writing skills are essential to success in school and are key to success in life. Therefore, the State Board of Education supports and encourages state and local efforts to help all students become successful readers. The Board encourages persons closest to the child, including parents, teachers, and other educators, to assume responsibility for creating conditions to support successful readers/writers. The Board encourages local school districts to have a policy that recognizes the critical role of reading/writing instruction.

The Board further encourages local school districts to establish a policy that recognizes the importance of providing children with reading skills based both on the structure of language and the meaning of language in context. Establishing a foundation for effective reading is one of the most important

functions of schools. Schools will teach systematic phonics in grades K-2 or 1-3. In addition to systematic phonics, students will read and write extensively to apply and develop the reading skills they have learned, including spelling, grammar, and penmanship. Local policy should encourage approaches are based on the needs of the student and should include emphasis on appropriate strategies that recognizes developing skills of the student.

The Board supports teacher training and systematic phonics and the use of a variety of skills and techniques for teaching children to read. The Board will promote state-level efforts to help schools meet standards for reading/writing.”

The first statement, “Effective reading/writing skills are essential to success in school and are key to success in life,” exemplifies the Board’s vision that reading skills are critical to every child’s future. This policy aligns with the goals of Reading First and the newly reauthorized ESEA, No Child Left Behind. The policy also states, “...schools will teach systematic phonics, students will read and write extensively to apply and develop the reading skills they have learned, including spelling, grammar, and penmanship,” indicating the importance of providing children with reading skills based on the structure of language and the meaning of language in context.

The state standards adopted in 1998, Leading Educational Achievement through Rigorous Nebraska Standards (L.E.A.R.N.S.), set a statewide priority for reading and writing achievement for Nebraska students and address the five components outlined in the Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read (National Reading Panel). The first four standards are as follows:

- 1.1.1 By the end of first grade, students will read and write using a variety of word recognition strategies at grade one level.

Example indicators:

- Use phonics to read, write, and spell (70 phonograms).
- Use vocabulary knowledge to read unfamiliar words.
- Confirm the accuracy of their reading by using phonics and context clues.

- 1.1.2 By the end of first grade, students will demonstrate phonological awareness and exhibit knowledge of letters and sounds.

Example indicators:

- Identify the work in uppercase letters of the alphabet.
- Identify and generate rhyming words.
- Say the initial, final, or vowel sounds of simple, one-syllable words.
- Separate and blend sounds to read words.

- 1.1.3 By the end of first grade, students will demonstrate knowledge of the organization of print when reading and writing.

Example indicators:

- Identify the front cover, back cover, and title page of a book.
- Follow pages sequentially when reading a book.
- Follow words from left to right and top to bottom on a printed page.
- Identify print (rather than pictures) as the feature being read.
- Identify roles of author and/or illustrator.

- 1.1.4 By the end of first grade, students will read and demonstrate comprehension at grade one level, using a variety of strategies.

Example indicators:

- Make predictions based on title, cover, illustrations, and text.
- Retell stories and sequence (beginning, middle, end).
- Identify important story elements (main character, setting, events).
- Connect what is read to real-life experiences (developing a foundation for later literacy analysis).
- Distinguish between truth and make-believe in literature.
- Recall details from fiction and nonfiction text.
- Read and explain their own writing and drawing.
- Choose books appropriate for their own interests, purposes, and reading level.
- Define vocabulary from literary selections.

The remainder of the first grade standards, pertaining to writing, speaking, and listening, are located in Appendix C of this application.

The adoption of state standards caused Nebraska school districts to align local curriculum guides while engaging in more informed conversations about implementing instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, fluency (reading, writing and speaking) and text comprehension.

In August of 1998, the Nebraska Department of Education invited Dr. Reid Lyon, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, to address teachers in a statewide teleconference. Dr. Lyon advocated the need for consistent, explicit, and direct instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, spelling and writing, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension beginning in kindergarten and continuing through the later grades. He emphasized the need for:

- Phonemic awareness as a prerequisite to phonics instruction
- Phonics and word identification for quick and accurate reading
- Knowledge of the 44 sounds that the 26 letters represent
- Direct instruction and practice using the phonograms

- Fluency practice to develop automatic reading
- Early identification of poor reading skills to prevent reading difficulties after first grade
- Movement away from unsubstantiated methods and toward methods that are well-supported in research literature
- Matching students to materials and text as they apply reading skills
- Students to read literature (fiction and nonfiction) at the appropriate level of difficulty

Nebraska state accreditation rules require all districts to be involved in an on-going school improvement process where local districts review and analyze student data to establish target area goals. As a result of the adoption of the standards, as well as Dr. Lyon's advice, many schools now have at least one goal related to the improvement of reading and writing achievement for all grade levels and in all content areas.

Reading/writing has topped the list of State Board of Education priorities since 1995, as demonstrated by the Board's award of over \$9 million of Goals 2000 sub-grant monies, for reading/writing program improvement. Through Goals 2000 grants, regional institutes and workshops provided training for K-12 districts targeting reading/writing instructional strategies, curriculum and assessments. These trainings renewed interest among teachers and administrators about "effective practices" for developing a knowledge base, reviewing local curricula and applying the five reading components.

Some of the Goals 2000 activities were as follows:

- Nebraska's K-12 reading and writing teachers participated in the development of and training in *The Nebraska Reading/Writing Frameworks* (1997-1999) <<http://www.nde.state.ne.us/READ/FRAMEWORK/index.html>>.
- Regional efforts through the ESUs were initiated for developing and refining reading/writing curricula aligned to state standards (1998-2001).
- Regional assessment institutes were conducted for creating criterion-referenced assessments aligned to districts' curricula and the state standards through the **S**chool-based **T**eacher-led **A**ssessment and **R**eporting **S**ystem (STARS).

In December of 2001, the Nebraska State Board of Education unanimously approved adoption of three recent reports: Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read – Summary Document (National Reading Panel), Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read, (Armbruster, Leyhr, and Osborn), and Put Reading First: Helping Your Child Learn to Read (RMC Research) as guidelines for reading instruction. As a result, these materials were distributed to all K-12 school districts, Educational Service Units, and Institutions of Higher Education Teacher Training programs (see Appendix D).

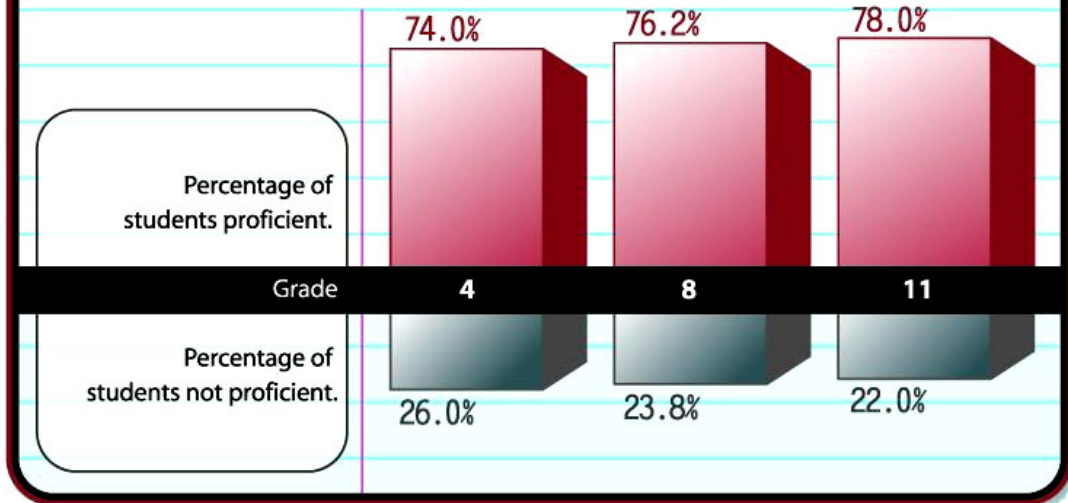
Shortly thereafter, lively discussions ensued at subsequent statewide and regional workshops regarding reading standards, assessment and/or instruction based on research-validated practices. It became evident that while not all districts and teachers were consistent in their practices in teaching reading, they were moving toward research-based practices as they collected and analyzed reading/writing data for school improvement planning. The seeds of awareness have been sown and have sprouted. However, cultivation and care must continue if these programs and practices are to flourish to the benefit of all of Nebraska's students.

Nebraska's Reading First Program has been designed as a continuation of the efforts made in regional Goals 2000 Grant reading initiatives. For a 1999-2000 Goals 2000 Grant application, a sample survey was conducted with 61 districts reaching nearly 200 K-1 teachers. Participating teachers and administrators indicated that the number one priority for professional development was training in reading and writing instructional strategies to meet the needs of all students. The second identified training need was in designing and implementing effective, useful assessment practices. An analysis of the survey responses also showed that 17% of the nearly 200 elementary teachers responding had no data to indicate the reading levels of the students in their classrooms. An additional 37% did not use the data available to make instructional decisions. For example, teachers reported that they taught to one instructional group, even though the reading levels of the students in one classroom ranged from grade one through twelve, in another classroom it ranged from grade three through eleven, and in a third classroom from PreK-6. Many survey responses revealed similar practices with numerous comments regarding the need for instructional strategies to meet the wide range of reading and writing achievement levels within a classroom.

At this time, no state-funded reading initiatives exist in Nebraska. The year 2001 marked the first time that all Nebraska school districts were required to report local student achievement data in reading at grades four, eight, and eleven. (Nebraska accreditation rules currently prohibit the use of standardized achievement tests prior to grade two.) A statewide aggregate showed that schools reported 74% of the fourth grade students had met the fourth-grade reading standards (see Appendix E).

Assessment of State Reading Standards

Three out of every four public school students were proficient on the state-approved reading standards. Standards indicate what Nebraska students should know and be able to do by the end of selected grades. Proficient means the student has met the standard. This graph includes 2000-2001 results from all public schools.



For the complete Nebraska 2000-2001 Report Card, see Appendix E or access the report online at <http://reportcard20002001.nde.state.ne.us/Page/PerfStandardOverall.asp?Category=1&Level=st>.

Even though many positive things are happening in reading in Nebraska, there are still many gaps. For instance, we know at the state level that 74% of our students have met the proficient and advanced levels in reading at the fourth grade level but disaggregated data is not available. This limitation prevents us from comparing data for subgroups such as minority or rural students. And while 74% is an impressive achievement level, 26% of Nebraska's students remain at the progressing or beginning levels that fall below the proficient mark. That is not good enough!

Over the past six years, Nebraska has spent over \$9 million in federal funding to improve reading instruction, but we need a more systematic approach to reach all school districts and all classroom teachers. Reading First will facilitate this approach by allowing us to improve reading instruction in an organized, consistent fashion based on scientifically-based reading research.

The Nebraska State Board of Education, Nebraska Department of Education, Nebraska Reading Leadership Team, and Reading First teams of teachers and administrators need more coordinated opportunities to stimulate and enhance their knowledge base about extending research into practice. This continuing education may take the form of workshops or institutes drawing on information gleaned from resources such as Starting Out Right (Burns, Griffin, and Snow), Every Child A Reader (Hiebert, Pearson, Taylor, Richardson, and Paris), Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read (Armbruster, Leyhr, and Osborn), Every Child Reading: An Action Plan of the Learning First Alliance (Learning First Alliance), and Teaching Reading Is Rocket Science (Moats). These resources, as well as other related articles, contain key elements to inform a cohesive statewide K-3 reading initiative.

The goal of the Nebraska Reading First Program is to have all students entering the fourth grade reading at the proficient level. Therefore, one aim of this proposal is to provide professional development opportunities for K-3 reading/writing teachers that will equip them to assess students' reading/writing competencies and design scientifically-based instructional programs. The grades K-1 and grade 4 Nebraska Reading/Writing Standards and the five components addressed in the National Reading Panel Reports will serve as the basis for identifying the content for all approaches and programs described through the Reading First program.

All participating Reading First districts will provide evidence of and a commitment to aligning their district's curricula with the Nebraska Reading/Writing Standards. Most districts also have an extensive norm-referenced testing plan, used primarily to comply with reporting student progress for Nebraska Department of Education's Rule 10 (see Appendix F). Further, all Nebraska schools have an overall district assessment plan to systematically collect, analyze, and report student data for local and state accountability and ultimately use this data to make instructional decisions in the classroom. These vehicles will assist participating districts in assessing consistency between their curriculum and the Nebraska Reading/Writing Standards.

The role of reading assessment should be to illuminate reality and prevent recklessly uninformed decision-making. Uninformed decision-making in the past may have contributed to what Martha Ruddell of Sonoma State University and past President of the National Reading Conference has referred to as "methodolatry," worshipers of methodology. It is important for teachers and administrators to understand that the most effective use of assessment is to make

adjustments in curriculum and teaching practices which impact students' reading/writing achievement.

The majority of Nebraska K-3 teachers have already created criterion-referenced assessments through the STARS assessment development activities in the areas of reading and writing. Criterion referenced assessments have been developed and reported statewide for all districts at grade levels four, eight, and eleven. K-3 data is reported locally. K-3 criterion referenced assessments provide valuable information for local data collection and decision making. Primary teachers used the STARS Quality Assessment Criteria as a guide for evaluating assessment items and the process in developing measures to assess student progress.

Assessment training has included skills for developing assessment measures and processes, but K-3 teachers also need a plan for disseminating student achievement data in a credible and accurate format to the students themselves, parents, teachers, administrators, taxpayers and others. Failure to do this in the past has led to an over-reliance on norm-referenced tests as the sole indicator of achievement, or to random use of informal measures. These inconsistent practices have not contributed to effective early reading instruction. If the assessment practices are to be disseminated in meaningful ways, efficient and effective management of assessment data is essential. Consequently, training for teachers in the use of technology for data management and dissemination is embedded in the overall professional development plan. This training will aid teachers in local accountability while assisting districts in collecting information to evaluate the effectiveness of their Nebraska Reading First Program.

The next step of this initiative is to design an in-depth process to identify assessments for screening and diagnosing specific needs of primary readers. "Best practices" must extend beyond the mere development and implementation of reading assessments to the point where they impact classroom instruction and student achievement. Therefore, Nebraska Reading First districts will not only meet the State Board priority by developing and implementing assessments, but will also "use assessment information to improve instruction and monitor the progress of students in programs, schools, and districts," as is consistent with the Nebraska State Board assessment process.

1. b. State Outline and Rationale for Using Scientifically-Based Reading Research

Components of Successful Reading Programs Kindergarten Through Third Grade

The Nebraska Reading First program will have as its foundation the essential components necessary to develop strong primary reading competencies: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary development, and text comprehension. Designing a comprehensive reading program, however, requires integrating proven research with the art of effective application of teaching reading to a diverse group of readers. Susan Hall and Louisa Moats describe this balance in their book, Straight Talk About Reading.

- A strong literature, language, and comprehension program that includes a balance of oral and written language
- An organized, explicit skills program that includes phonemic awareness (sound in words), phonics, and decoding skills to address the needs of the emergent reader
- Ongoing diagnosis that informs teaching and assessment that ensures accountability
- A powerful early intervention program that provides individual tutoring for children at risk of reading failure

Nebraska Reading First will incorporate the five essential components addressed in the National Reading Panel Report. While these five components are not new to most teachers, there is currently inconsistent application of these components in reading instruction in Nebraska schools. Reading teachers have reached consensus on “what” the essential components are through the development and implementation of the Nebraska Reading/Writing Frameworks and the Nebraska Reading/Writing Standards. What remains is “how” schools implement consistent instructional and assessment practices. The purpose of Nebraska Reading First will be to ensure that all children learn to read and continue to read for a lifetime. The basis for children learning to read is quality instruction from knowledgeable teachers, supervisors and administrators who make decisions for learning and instruction based on these five components.

1) Phonemic Awareness

Extensive research studies support the belief that phonemic awareness is one of the best predictors of success in early reading. Poor phonemic awareness at four to six years of age is a predictor of reading difficulties throughout the elementary years and beyond. Also, studies indicate that students who lack phonemic awareness have more difficulty learning to spell. Providing instruction to students about how to categorize words based on their sounds increases phonemic awareness and helps students become proficient readers. Studies support training in phonological awareness to enhance early reading acquisition. Evidence shows post-

test reading scores were higher for children who received phonological training and that the effects were substantial in comparison to a group that only listened to and discussed stories. Training in phonological awareness produces gains in reading skills regardless of whether this training is accompanied by instruction in letters of spelling-sound relationships (e.g., Ball and Blachman, 1991; Cunningham, 1990; Fox and Routh, 1976, 1984; McGuinness et al., 1995; Uhry and Shepherd 1993). Further, when phonological awareness, letter-sound instruction, and writing opportunities are taught to first grade students together, students acquire better conventional spelling skills (Adams, Treiman, and Pressley, 1998) and (Clarke, 1988).

Current Practices in Nebraska

To meet Reading/Writing Standard 1.1.2, which requires first grade students to “demonstrate phonological awareness and exhibit knowledge of letters and sounds,” many kindergarten and first grade teachers design and teach classroom learning activities to develop and assess phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness skills are introduced in the first two months of kindergarten, but are reinforced and integrated into instructional strategies for teaching the phonetic principles throughout the primary grades. Generally, second and third grade teachers continue using phoneme instruction and practices to reinforce word identification and spelling skills as well as to meet Reading/Writing Standard 4.1.1: “By the end of fourth grade, students will demonstrate the use of multiple strategies in reading unfamiliar words and phrases.” However, teachers and administrators apply these concepts inconsistently.

Currently, K-3 teachers are not required to report reading/writing assessment data to the state. Instead, each district is encouraged to report K-3 reading/writing progress at the local level. Thus, the implementation of standards, documentation of assessment, and reporting is inconsistent since there is no statewide documentation system to validate how schools are reporting K-3 reading/writing data to their local constituents. No information is available about how classroom teachers are using the reading/writing assessment data to make instructional decisions and/or to select scientifically based programs and practices. It is critical to create a systematic way to gather student achievement data in order to validate instructional practices, the types of assessments used to document progress, and the process used to report progress locally and statewide. The Nebraska Reading First team has identified *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills* (DIBELS 5th edition) , GORT-4, PPVT-3rd Edition, and Gates-MacGinitie, (Kame’enui, E.J., Simmons, D.C., Good, R.H., and Harn, B.A., 2001) as the measure that will be used for reporting statewide accountability and documentation for grantee

districts. Non-grantee schools will be provided with a list of assessment strategies that align to the five components (Appendix J).

Ideal Practices

Implementation of research-based practices is a complex and multifaceted task. Teachers and administrators need to understand the essential elements of exemplary phonemic awareness curriculum, instruction, programs, and materials, as well as how these practices impact and benefit K-3 students. In an ideal comprehensive reading program, kindergarten and first grade, classroom teachers provide systematic phonemic awareness instruction and use assessment data to make decisions about a student's ability to hear rhymes and alliteration, do oddity tasks, blend orally, split syllables, segment sounds, and manipulate (add, delete or move) sounds to create words. Second and third grade teachers continue phonemic oral training and phonological skills while integrating these practices with letter-sound instruction, spelling and writing opportunities (Snow, Burns, and Griffin, 1998).

Each district will identify tools for on-going classroom assessments, out-come based/criterion-referenced assessments, screening tests, diagnostic measures, and program monitoring. These tools will help teachers identify specific instructional strategies, materials, and interventions for individual learner needs. Nebraska Reading First Institutes, a series of three-day regional trainings, will provide specific strategies and techniques for instructing phonemic awareness and using identified assessments. A network of coaches and lead teachers will assist classroom teachers in learning about the different purposes of assessment. Together they will implement a systematic data collection/management and analysis system to show progress at the district level within the context of a statewide collection system. Data driven instruction will provide teachers with assessment information to make informed modifications and adaptations so students move to the next level of learning. Kindergarten through third grade assessment information will guide teachers as they monitor student progress, match materials to specific student levels, incorporate strategies, and use specific techniques at the appropriate levels. Coaches and lead teachers will also provide technical assistance, onsite support, and monitor program progress to ensure that implementation is occurring at the local level.

2) Phonetic Principles

Phonetic instruction is critical for understanding the alphabetic principles and unlocking the code to the English language. Programs and instruction must be systematic—that is, the plan of

instruction must include a carefully selected set of letter-sound relationships organized into a logical sequence. It must also be explicit, providing teachers with precise directions for teaching these relationships. With a systematic and sequential approach, sound patterns are taught in a logical sequence with repeated practices using an engaging multi-sensory approach. The units for instruction (sound syllable, morpheme, word) should vary according to students' reading and spelling skill (Tunmer and Hoover, 1993).

The teacher models, prompts, and guides the student practice. Subsequently, the student practices independently and applies the learning while the teacher monitors and assesses the progress and adapts the instruction for building student learning at the correct level of difficulty. This is exemplified in the National Reading Panel's review of the five approaches to phonics instruction.

Nebraska Reading First classrooms will include explicit phonics instruction based on individual student needs. Dr. Reid Lyon in his speech delivered in 1998 to Nebraska educators stated, "all children need the same skills to be able to read but they may not need the same instruction at the same time." Phonics instruction should be kept simple and applied in a meaningful context with materials available for students to practice using the phonograms in words and sentences (text with high frequency words and taught phonograms). Teachers need to know the important connection between reading comprehension achievement and a student's progress in fast and accurate word identification by the end of first grade. Students that are not reading at grade level by the end of first grade need ongoing intervention to ensure that the needed practices and modeling will support their ability to achieve proficient reading skills in the second grade. Teachers will administer assessments to screen students for specific phoneme skills to make decisions to further diagnose specific reading problems in acquiring phonetic skills. Other assessment data will be gathered to monitor student progress throughout the year while other assessment data will showcase the learning set by the standards or outcomes established for each grade level. All Nebraska Reading First K-3 teachers will collaborate with local lead teachers, administrators, special education teachers, Title I teachers and regional coaches to ensure that students will receive timely intervention as appropriate. If students are not monitored for progress, it is difficult for teachers to know which phonemes need review or which ones have been mastered. Mastery of the phonograms will help students read fluently and/or decode words independently without using all of their cognitive energy. When students have

gained proficiency for attacking new words, energy is saved for comprehending these words as meaningful “chunks” of texts (Hiebert, Pearson, Taylor, Richardson, and Paris).

Primary-level instruction that supports successful reading acquisition is consistent, well designed, and focused. Teachers lead lessons where children receive systematic word recognition instruction on common, consistent letter-sound relationships and important but often unpredictable high frequency words, such as *the* and *what* (Hiebert, Pearson, Taylor, Richardson, and Paris).

Current Practices

As noted from the sample survey from 61 districts, inconsistencies in instructional strategies for teaching reading to primary students was an area of concern. Kindergarten through third grade teachers and administrators observed and reported inconsistencies. Some teachers still employ unsuccessful approaches such as assigning workbook pages or using phonics worksheets as “seatwork time fillers.” These worksheets frustrate students with unrelated tasks of coloring, drawing lines, circling, and guessing the sound/letter of a picture instead of actually practicing phonograms through multi-sensory application based on “real words.” When students participate in these types of instructional activities and fail to improve in decoding and word recognition skills, frustration can result.

Further results from the sample survey indicate that the more prevalent primary level approaches were programs with little guidance for direct, explicit instruction for the phonetic principles. Some responses reflected a variety of activities that appeared to be fragmented and disjointed within a grade level and/or among K-3 grade levels. In several instances training for teachers of beginning readers was part of a K-6 program and not specifically designed to meet the needs of beginning readers. Reading First Institutes are designed to provide specific training for the individual grades to ensure specific strategies for the four grade levels.

Teachers and principals identified needs related to implementing systematic phonics instruction, accommodating diverse achievement levels, and providing basic reading instruction. Several teachers and principals requested professional development designed specifically for kindergarten and first grade teachers focusing on the phonetic principles. If reading achievement is going to improve, children need to learn the technical skills that enable them to read: awareness of the sound structure of words, the system of letter sound correspondence,

and multiple word attack techniques. Studies indicate that only a very small number of students cannot master these skills in kindergarten and first grade if the skills are taught explicitly and directly (Lyon).

Failure to teach the basic phonics system by the end of first grade has been identified as an underlying factor of reading failure. Therefore, well-informed, well-trained teachers of early readers using appropriate materials are essential. The Nebraska Reading First coordinators will be working with educators of beginning readers to renew instructional practices that emphasize the role and importance of explicit and direct phonics instruction to prevent reading difficulties.

Ideal Practices

Phonetic instruction needs to have a defined scope and sequence to identify achievement benchmarks. These targets need to be well defined and understood by all K-3 teachers to ensure quality instruction for learner outcomes that build and support at each level.

Kindergarten and first grade instruction will be designed to provide explicit instruction and practice with sound structures that correspond to letters and the spelling of words. Frequently used words will then be taught and practiced to encourage accuracy, fluency, and developing a repertoire of words in their sight vocabulary, a prerequisite for comprehension.

It is important that all teachers do everything possible to ensure that the young reader learns how to decode well. It is impossible to understand the meaning of words, sentences, and paragraphs until such text is decoded. "Beyond being able to sound out words per se, the young reader needs to be able to do so fluently. The more fluent the recognition of words, the less mental capacity consumed by word recognition" (Pressley and Collins-Block). This decoding is critical because mental capacity is limited, and the capacity available for comprehension is the capacity left over from decoding efforts.

The degree of explicitness in the instructional methods used to teach phonetic principles has a direct effect on the amount of improvement in reading skills for many students. Explicit instruction in the alphabetic principle is more effective with children who began the year doing poorly in phonological processing. Therefore, Nebraska Reading First will address the diverse instructional needs for ensuring and intensifying the reading progress for children who need this level of support such as English language learners, verified special education students, students identified for remedial support, students from families of high mobility, and students unable to

learn within the structure of the regular classroom. It is important that teachers are provided with specific interventions for children needing more intensive instruction, prompting and practices.

Second and third grades are pivotal school years for ensuring that all students are able to make the transition to fourth grade where the student is expected to read and comprehend, to analyze, critique, abstract, and reflect on text. Comprehension can be limited if a child is unable to use word identification skills to read fluently and automatically. If a student is struggling with recognizing the words of the text, they are unable to comprehend the meaning of the reading selection (Daneman and Tardiff, 1987; Perfetti, 1985). Therefore, second grade teachers need to closely observe readers at the beginning of the year. Second-grade teachers typically find themselves faced with two sets of students when they return to school from their summer vacation: a few are reading independently at advanced levels, but the remainder seem not to know how to read at all. The latter group may have simply forgotten what they learned, but they may have failed to learn to read adequately in the first grade or receive the practice needed throughout the summer months. The job of the second grade teacher is to know the level of readers and match them to instruction and materials at the correct level of difficulty to ensure that all students gain or regain their first grade year accomplishments and move on to honing these skills throughout second and third grade (Hayes and Grether, 1983; Alexander and Entwisle, 1996).

Nebraska Reading First K-3 reading teams will be trained to use multiple assessments to gather learner data through tools that screen, diagnose, monitor progress, and measure outcomes. This assessment data will enable educators to make informed decisions on how students are progressing and which students need specific intervention during the first four years in a district. Regional coaches and local lead teachers will support reading team monthly meetings to coordinate the implementation of local reading programs, to review the use of research-based instructional strategies, and to build teacher capacity for the purpose of administering, collecting, managing and analyzing assessment data to make reading decisions for K-3 students in the district.

Nebraska Reading First, through the Reading Institutes, will provide training for teams of K-3 reading teachers together with instructional leaders, regional coaches, local lead teachers, principals and curriculum coordinators, to promote a fluid scope and sequence that supports

scientifically-based practices for young readers. Primary-level instruction that supports successful reading acquisition needs to be consistent, well-designed, and focused. Thus, programs and training will support and guide teachers to implement lessons where children receive systematic phonics instruction for developing word recognition skills based on common, consistent letter-sound relationships. Each year teachers will build on previous skills and continue specific support until students are reading at or above grade level. Furthermore, teachers will connect these word recognition skills to reading, writing, and spelling words from an identified high frequency word list and a vocabulary list appropriate to their instructional reading level.

3) Fluency

During the past two decades, fluency has been defined as one of the “silent reading components.” If reading must be fluent for students to improve reading comprehension skills, then fast and accurate letter naming in kindergarten and automatic word identification in the first grade can be used as benchmark indicators for future success in second and third grade. Teachers need to understand and become aware that while the amount of time it takes to achieve task accuracy varies greatly from student to student, the time required to become automatic is far less variable. Once students achieve accuracy, similar amounts of practice will produce automaticity. Many teachers seem to be satisfied when the number of word recognition errors approaches zero, but even at this stage there is still room for improvement. With continued practice the length of the visual unit increases, as does reading speed. This indicates clearly that accuracy in recognition is not sufficient for fluent reading. The goal should be to move beyond accuracy to automaticity—and automaticity is achieved only with practice. By exposing students to repeated reading and also by providing ample reading practice with material at the independent level, teachers can help students become automatic decoders and, thus, good readers (Dowhower, 1987; Herman, 1985; Rasinski and Reinking, 1987).

Through Reading First Teacher Training Institutes, teachers will have opportunities to learn strategies to build fluency skills. Young readers need to practice in order to read long enough to become accurate then automatic in decoding words in the reading selections. The ultimate goal of fluent reading is for comprehension of a variety of texts. To develop automaticity, teachers will become acquainted with management techniques to help students acquire useful decoding strategies and to apply these skills at the appropriate reading level (Allington, 1977; Stanovich, 1986).

Current Practices

In February 1999, Dr. Elfrieda Hiebert of the University of Michigan highlighted the urgency of fluency practice and assessment during three presentations at regional workshops in Nebraska. She demonstrated strategies and materials advocating that students read passages at their independent level, that students read expository text to build background knowledge, and that students track fluency progress with repeated readings. Participants were engaged in evaluating appropriate texts and given practical guidelines for developing passages aligned to themes or units of study in the classroom.

Nebraska teachers are in the beginning stages of reviewing the research and implementing assessments to measure the fluency of letter naming, word identification, and passage reading. In most districts, reading assessments have been used solely to gather evidence of accuracy in reading and not automaticity. Many of the 76 districts surveyed have used a variety of informal reading inventories to document reading level, types of errors, and comprehension checks but few have included fluency rates. Some districts have initiated fluency instruction but the practice is inconsistently implemented. For district criterion-referenced assessments, districts screened reading passages for reading level with a validated readability formula, such as the Spache, Dale/Chall, Fry or Fleisch/Kincaid. However, fluency assessments and readability formulas alone do not improve fluency rates. Ongoing practice is necessary to increase the reading rates of students (Harris and Sipay, 1990).

Ideal Practices

Establishing the need for fluency practices and assessments will come by reviewing the research literature. Becoming aware of the reading rate guidelines will move more K-3 teachers to implement planned practice activities to improve fluency rates. "When reading a word, word recognition, comprehension, and memory processes compete. If the word recognition is effortless and if the word is easily comprehended as a vocabulary item familiar to the reader, there is plenty of capacity left over to remember the word and to integrate it's meaning with the previous text. If readers are to have sufficient capacity to do all that skilled reading entails, then comprehension and word recognition processes need to be fairly automatic. When comprehension and decoding processes are not automatic, it is possible for readers to carry them out with little benefit. That is, so much capacity is used carrying out the comprehension and word recognition processes that there is no capacity left over to remember what was read" (Pressley and McCormick). Nebraska Reading First teachers will need training to select or

develop passages with readability levels suitable for the diverse learners in each classroom. Managing practice sessions and monitoring progress are skills that will be addressed and supported in teacher training sessions for Reading First. Trainers and coaches will model fluency strategies and techniques essential for building comprehension skills. Teachers will need to provide practices for fluency prior to using assessments to measure growth. Knowledge of a student's reading level will be essential in matching fluency passages to the independent level in order to gain fluency or automaticity without sacrificing accuracy.

4) Vocabulary

Vocabulary instruction results in increased student word knowledge and comprehension (50th percentile students advanced to the 83rd percentile after vocabulary instruction). The most effective instruction includes methods in which children are given both information about the words' definitions and examples of the words' usage in contexts. These practices are difficult to monitor and supervise. Teaching vocabulary is a specialized aspect of developing background knowledge essential for comprehension and is widespread in most reading programs. Teachers may assign a list of vocabulary words but the research is very specific about the importance of teaching crucial word meanings prior to encountering them in text (Beck, McKeown, McCaslin, and Burkes, 1979).

Learning word meanings incidentally during reading does not come easily or in large quantities. It is already acknowledged that word recognition is one process that must be taught to beginning readers. If the recognition of words is not automatic, the extra effort and time taken to figure out words detracts from comprehension. If vocabulary words have been taught well, the appropriate use of vocabulary flashcards increases skills and increases the interest levels in poor readers. Flashcards that include phrases or sentences using the targeted words are most effective in implicit questions, while single-word flashcards appear to be a more effective way to speed up reading (Journal of Educational Psychology, Vol. 89, No. 2, pp. 276-288). Placing word cards or phrase cards in a left to right format help students develop serial processing which is needed in reading fluently with the ability to comprehend text.

Developing a sophisticated vocabulary empowers students as they become conscious of word structures (affixes, roots and bases) and learns the "story" behind words by researching a word's origin and history. Supporting the continuous use of taught vocabulary is imperative in opening young minds to a word's many uses in real life.

Current Practices

Through the STARS standards alignment and assessment creation, teachers have incorporated more direct vocabulary development to validate Nebraska Reading/Writing Standards as indicated below.

- 1.1.1 By the end of first grade, students will read and write using a variety of word recognition strategies at grade one level.
- 1.1.4 By the end of first grade, students will read and demonstrate comprehension at grade one level, using a variety of strategies.
- 4.1.2 By the end of the fourth grade, students will demonstrate the use of multiple strategies to increase their vocabulary.
- 4.3.1 By the end of fourth grade, students will participate in group discussions by asking questions and contributing information and ideas.
- 4.4.1 By the end of the fourth grade, students will identify information gained and complete tasks through listening.

School districts are concerned about vocabulary as indicated through district school improvement profiles of student outcome data. When districts triangulate the student data with instructional data, it becomes obvious that practices in vocabulary development are generally limited to assigned lists and/or students looking up definitions in a textbook glossary or dictionary. Students usually copy the first definition regardless of the context for a given reading passage. Students may or may not be asked to use the list of words in authentic speaking or writing activities. Some schools have adopted lists of vocabulary words or use a vocabulary workbook that is disjointed from the actual assigned reading selections. Vocabulary instruction has been incidental and random.

Further, vocabulary instruction often proves unsuccessful for increasing comprehension achievement because most instruction fails to produce in-depth word knowledge and/or words that have not been taught prior to the reading of the text. To address this concern, teachers have used the findings from their assessment data in order to prioritize the vocabulary essential for learning and, in so doing, improved the comprehension and understanding of the reading selections and concepts.

Ideal Practices

Vocabulary instruction is vital for understanding and comprehending the meaning of a reading selection in a language arts class or other content areas. The development of vocabulary is essential for oral communication (speaking or listening), reading words in print, or writing words to communicate ideas. Teacher training for grantee schools and statewide professional development for non-grantee districts will support methods for selecting a variety of vocabulary words for instruction that align with fiction and nonfiction selections. Essential words (vocabulary needed to understand the concepts in the text) need direct instruction prior to students reading a text selection. Students also need exposure to and practice with high utility and frequency words. If a student has difficulty with particular words, those words need re-teaching and continuous practice and use. Establishing immediate recognition and correct usage takes time and effort. Pre-reading activity includes the introduction of new vocabulary to help students to relate unfamiliar concepts to familiar ones. Teaching vocabulary is critical to clarify and enrich the meanings of known words and to shift words from receptive to expressive vocabulary and apply meaning. The study of morphemes and whole word meanings helps develop a knowledge of words that supports in-depth comprehension and understanding of reading passages. Direct instruction of word meanings using multiple strategies increases the probability of young readers developing a richness of understanding through the study of synonyms, antonyms, homonyms, definitions, class membership, concepts and features, signal words, context clues, root/base/affix, idioms, dictionary skills, and word histories (Stahl, 1999). Assessments aligned with the vocabulary instruction become an essential piece of monitoring and adjusting the instruction and intervention needs of individual students.

5) Comprehension

Comprehension is the ultimate goal for students as they become purposeful, successful readers. It is critical that teachers and administrators take the following steps: 1) allow ample time for text reading; 2) provide direct strategy instruction and application practices for implementation; 3) include many and varied opportunities for peer and collaborative learning; and, 4) plan many occasions for students to talk to a teacher and one another about their responses to reading. Teachers ensure that children become adept monitors of the accuracy of their reading as well as of their understanding of texts by teaching strategies such as predicting, inferencing, clarifying misunderstandings, and summarizing. Instructional activities that promote growth in word recognition and comprehension include repeated reading of text, guided reading

and writing, strategy lessons, reading aloud with feedback, and conversations about texts children have read.

Primary-level classroom environments in successful schools provide opportunities for students to apply what they have learned while their teacher models and guides instruction for everyday reading and writing. In these classrooms, teachers read books aloud and hold follow-up discussions, children read independently every day, and children write stories and keep journals. These events are monitored frequently by teachers, ensuring that time is well-spent and that children receive feedback on their efforts. Teachers plan these activities carefully, using information from ongoing assessment of children's strengths and needs as the primary basis for new activities.

Proficient reading in second and third grade is sustained and enhanced by programs that adhere to four fundamental features: 1) deep and broad opportunities to read, 2) new knowledge and vocabulary, 3) an emphasis on the influence of different text structures (e.g., narrative versus expository) and the ways writers organize particular texts, and 4) explicit attention to reasoning about text (Hiebert, Pearson, Taylor, Richardson, and Paris, CIERA, 1998).

Current Practices

Nebraska Reading/Writing Standards target K-3 reading comprehension through the majority of the reading standards:

- 1.1.4 By the end of first grade, students will read and demonstrate comprehension at grade one level, using a variety of strategies.
- 1.1.5 By the end of first grade, students will respond to fiction and non-fiction text through writing, drawing, and verbal responses.
- 4.1.3 By the end of the fourth grade, students will identify the main idea and supporting details in what they have read.
- 4.1.5 By the end of the fourth grade, students will identify and use characteristics to classify different types of text.
- 4.1.6 By the end of the fourth grade, students will identify and apply knowledge of the structure, elements, and literary techniques to analyze fiction.

- 4.1.7 By the end of the fourth grade, students will identify and apply knowledge of the text structure and organizational elements to analyze nonfiction or information text.
- 4.1.8 By the end of the fourth grade, students will identify similarities and differences between two fourth grade level reading selections.

As districts statewide began developing assessments aligned with state standards, it became evident that teachers spend most of their instructional time asking students comprehension questions rather than teaching students the skills and strategies to improve comprehension. Another concern for K-3 teachers was that narrative/story texts were common during language arts instructional blocks while nonfiction/expository texts were only addressed incidentally during math, science, social studies, and health classes, if at all. Teachers need to incorporate instruction for cause/effect, question/answer, compare/contrast, problem/solution, and description in order for students to learn multiple strategies for comprehending expository text structures. These beginning efforts need further support through the Reading First programs to ensure confident and consistent instruction appropriate at each grade level in the primary grades.

The Nebraska Reading/Writing Standards also called for teachers to question and guide learning based on levels of comprehension (literal, inferential, critical, and creative). Districts that have disaggregated criterion referenced assessment data have identified weaknesses in students' abilities to infer, generalize, summarize and distinguish fact from fiction. Thus, training teachers in developing specific skills in this area will provide the instructional support to improve all levels of comprehension for primary students.

Ideal Practices

Nebraska Reading First grantees will be required and trained to include pre-reading instruction and activities that incorporate direct instruction in comprehension skills. These skills include: 1) setting a purpose; 2) teacher modeling and explanation; 3) guided practice with feedback; 4) independent practice; and 5) opportunities for application. Multiple text readings are expected and required in order for students to acquire comprehension skills. In order for students to improve in reading comprehension, they need to have time allotted for reading as well as time for daily opportunities to share, discuss, and reflect orally or in writing about what they have read. Academic learning time is precious, and blocks of instructional time must be guarded within the school day if students are expected to show improvement in reading comprehension.

The Reading First guidelines of 90 minutes of literacy instruction per day will help make the improvement in reading comprehension a reality.

Nebraska Reading First Institutes will be designed to incorporate the outlined research-based practices and will provide training and technical support for regional trainers, coaches, district teacher leaders, administrators, and classroom reading teachers. Nebraska's goal for Reading First is to have all students reading at or above grade level by the end third grade. Nebraska Reading First grantee schools and training institutes will use the *Reading Teacher Reading Academies: Professional Development for Preventing Reading Difficulties* training materials developed by the Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts, The University of Texas at Austin College of Education.

On receiving approval for Nebraska Reading First funding, one of the first tasks will be to form a special Materials Review Committee to review and evaluate reading programs and materials that grantee schools will use to make a selection for a district's core reading program. Representation from outstanding K-3 reading teachers from local districts, regional reading coaches, statewide reading specialists, and the national reading expert panel will collaborate with the coordinating and training cadre in an extensive review of materials using the criteria established through *A Consumer's Guide to Evaluating a Core Reading Program Grades K-3: A Critical Elements Analysis*, Simmons and Kame'enui (Appendix K) {National Center to Improve the Tools of Educators, NCITE; and, Institute for the Development of Educational Achievement, IDEA}). Districts may choose to independently use the same process and criteria if they outline specifically how their selection matches to scientifically-based reading research.

Nebraska Reading First will ensure that only scientifically-based researched programs will be utilized in this project for grantee schools. This process will review scientifically-based reading materials and programs that incorporate strategies and approaches that produce results. A process for selecting materials will apply the following guidelines to evaluate programs:

- Efficacy based on carefully designed experimental studies, program based on research-validated methods
- Field-tested with a large sampling
- Alignment with curriculum outcomes and state standards

- Explicit and systematic instruction in the K-3 grade levels in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension of text
- Scope and sequence that ensures repetition and practices for explicit learning
- Moves from basic reading skills to higher order reading skills
- Supports content area reading (mathematics, science, social studies, visual and performing arts)
- Support for differentiated instruction for flexible grouping and instruction at the correct level of difficulty
- Instructional strategies for supporting struggling readers or enrichment needs
- Assessments to monitor progress of reading outcomes

According to Smith and Kame'enui (1998), the principles for establishing well-planned instruction for students who need special assistance in reading include:

- Specific and clear strategies
- Planned scaffolding
- Strategic integration
- Connection to prior knowledge, and
- Continuous review

A quality comprehensive reading program will offer materials and explicit instructional techniques and methods to attain desirable results for students learning to read.

The results of the Materials Review Committee will be shared with potential grantees at the prewriting workshops. Non-grantee schools will also have access to the results of materials identified by the Nebraska Reading First Materials Review Committee. Districts will be encouraged to analyze their existing programs and use the materials evaluation process to upgrade programs to align with scientifically-based criteria. The knowledge of this process at the district level will help sustain and provide guidance for further analysis of reading programs beyond grade three. The statewide reading institutes will emphasize the importance of implementing reading programs that are scientifically-based. Training and professional development will be provided to increase the capacity of non-grantee districts to review their existing reading programs and make necessary changes (Appendix L).

Adopting a quality reading program is not enough. The key to aligning standards, assessment, and instruction involves efforts from all local district staff members. Matching appropriate instructional strategies and interventions with identified student needs is imperative. Teachers of reading need to use specific assessment data to make instructional decisions that will improve student learning. The intensity and level of expertise that educators possess regarding multiple assessments has grown immensely during the past four years due to the STARS initiative. Currently, local districts are using the data collected from their assessments to analyze and determine the strengths and weaknesses of reading, writing, speaking, and listening within a building or classroom. The collaborative efforts have brought together administrators and teachers in conversations regarding how to best address specific needs.

Nebraska's School-based Teacher-led Assessment and Reporting System (STARS) is central to the Nebraska School Improvement Process (Appendix F). The student performance information gained through the assessment of students in grades four, eight, and eleven on standards (norm referenced, criterion referenced, or classroom assessments) and instructional practices creates the framework for improvement decisions. These local efforts form the core of how student learning is strengthened and therefore, how reform efforts statewide connect to the Reading First initiative. All Nebraska schools are collecting student performance data to be used in a formal school improvement process. Many districts are participating through the North Central Accreditation model and others are actively involved in the Nebraska Framework for School Improvement. The improvement of schools and the use of assessment data to support that improvement process are of high priority to all of the school districts (K-12) in Nebraska.

The Nebraska Reading First program will promote the use of multiple measures to screen, diagnose, document progress, and assess local standards aligned to the state standards. The statewide Reading Coordinating and Training Cadre has applied the guidelines established from the University of Oregon (Kame'enui, E.J., Simmons, D.C., Good, R.H., and Harn, B.A., 2001) in selecting assessments that will be used to gather student reading data for Reading First grantees. Local districts participating in training through the statewide professional development Reading Institutes will receive examples of the assessments used by grantee schools in addition to the evaluation process for analyzing a district's assessments for grades K-3. The evaluation process provides guidance in reviewing reading measurement tools that are valid and reliable for collecting student learning data for the five reading components (phonemic

awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension of text) using specific assessment tools.

Each district in the state has created criterion-referenced assessments that are aligned to the Nebraska State Standards for grades K-12. The STARS initiative (Appendix A.1) has established a set of quality criteria to insure assessments of the highest quality. The six quality criteria guide the process of development and accountability to measure student achievement on Nebraska Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening Standards. All Nebraska school districts are required to submit a District Assessment Portfolio of the assessment practices and procedures used for measuring students on district standards. In the portfolio, school districts are also required to include a sample of the actual assessment instruments. This sample has been generated randomly and assigned to the school districts for an annual review by a panel selected by Buros Center for Testing.

Together with the districts' assessments, Reading First schools will provide assessment tools to screen and monitor students' progress and identify those students who may be at risk of reading failure in future years. Grantee schools will collect the data to make instructional decisions at the classroom level. The Nebraska Reading First team has identified *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills* (DIBELS 5th edition) (Kame'enui, E.J., Simmons, D.C., Good, R.H., and Harn, B.A., 2001) as a measure that will be used for reporting statewide accountability and documentation. DIBELS provides teachers with information for screening purposes and progress monitoring (Appendix J) in the areas of phonemic awareness, phoneme segmentation fluency, letter naming fluency, word identification strategies, and fluency passages. This measurement tool has undergone the analysis from Kame'enui, et al. with the reliability ranging from 0.72 to 0.89 with a mean of 0.81. This measure is a valid indicator of reading development for young readers in addition to providing a means to predict reading competence throughout a student's schooling. Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test 3rd edition (PPVT-3), has an internal consistency of Alpha: .92 to .98 (median: .95) and split-half: .86 to .97 (median: .94) with a test-retest of .91 to .94 (median: .92) range. The Gray Oral Reading Test, (GORT-IV) will identify students' sight word capacity, vocabulary, fluency rate, and comprehension of text for specific grade levels and/or reading levels. These assessments provide teachers with efficient tools for quick assessments on important reading skills that impact reading development. Through careful screening, teachers will be able to determine those students who need further diagnosis or intensive and alternative intervention. Each Reading First School will identify diagnostic

measures in order to provide specific information on students targeted for specific early intervention (Appendix J).

The authors have designed a resource, *Linking Testing to Teaching: A Classroom Resource for Reading Assessment and Instruction*, which provides teachers with guidance in planning instruction, intervention, and enrichment based on students' test results. The linking manuals guide teachers through a series of questions to identify which reading skill or skills need special attention. The developers have suggested instructional techniques that have successfully developed these skills. Tips for integrating instruction into the classroom are provided for teachers and coaches. This will enable teachers to use valid and reliable assessments for outcomes measures. Nebraska Reading First schools will use Pre-reading (if needed), and/or Beginning Reading through Level 3 to gather consistent data for outcome measures and documentation.

The screening assessments will help teachers determine the need for specific diagnostic evaluations for students at risk of future reading difficulties. Classroom teachers, Title I teachers, special education teachers, and school psychologists will become involved with interpreting the results in order to plan for specific interventions. Therefore, it is important that each Reading First School design a plan for collaborative efforts among classroom teachers, administration, and specialists.

Special education and classroom teachers' responsibilities, working in collaboration to administer specific diagnostic assessments. As a collaborative team, teachers will be trained to administer and interpret assessments to make decisions for individual education plans according to requirements established in the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Non-grantee districts will be guided by five regional trainers as well as reading coaches statewide and encouraged to use the *Analysis of Reading Assessment Measures Coding Form* (Kame'enui et al, February 2002) in selecting other quality instruments for purposes of screening, diagnostic, progress monitoring, or outcome measures that are not listed but used by grantee school districts (Appendix J). These instruments will be introduced during statewide professional development Reading Institutes for grades K-3 reading teachers. Trainers and regional coaches will have specific training in using these measures to provide technical assistance to LEAs throughout the grant period. Using these assessment measures will enable

school districts to continue making informed decisions regarding students' progress in reading beyond the course of the grant period.

Nebraska Reading First schools will align the assessment efforts, data gathering, analysis, and reporting with the statewide accountability system (STARS) and the Nebraska School Improvement and/or North Central Accreditation in accordance with Rule #10. This process is required for ongoing improvement of student learning. Each district uses acquired data to set goals and create action plans to focus on student learning, instructional strategies, and/or programmatic adjustments needed to improve the academic progress of all students. Each district is currently involved in analyzing district student learning data that addresses the following process:

- Explain the purpose of the assessment tool (screening, diagnostic, progress monitoring, criterion referenced assessments, norm referenced assessments, demographic information, incident data)
- Identify what data or information was collected
- Describe the data/information collection process
- Present and report data in a concise and understood format that shows evidence of learning or areas of concern
- Analyze and write summary reports from the observations
- Identify the implications of how the information impacts decision making and planning
- Identify specific areas of need for student improvement and develop a plan for accomplishing the targeted goal of improvement

Through the STARS initiative, Nebraska school districts have created criterion-referenced assessments aligned to the Reading/Writing Standards (LEARNs). These assessment tools together with other outcome measures will be used to gather data aligned to district outcomes (Appendix J).

1. c. State Definition of Sub-grant Eligibility

To be effective, all sub-grants awarded will need to be of sufficient size and scope to reach the desired outcomes. Therefore, Nebraska will limit its number of eligible applicants to those districts having the greatest needs as indicated by Nebraska fourth grade reading assessment

data, along with a high percentage of students receiving free or reduced-priced lunches. Any LEA wishing to apply must meet the following criteria to be considered:

- 1) Assessment data indicating that more than 250 or 34% of the 4th grade students scored below the level of Proficiency as reported to the Nebraska Department of Education using the STARS reading assessment process (see Nebraska Department of Education website at www.nde.state.ne.us).

and

- 2) Have one or more of the following characteristics:
 - a) Be in an empowerment zone (Omaha is Nebraska's only district in an empowerment zone)
 - b) Have at least 10% of their schools identified for Title 1 School Improvement
 - c) School district has 30% or higher percentage of students coming from families with incomes below the poverty level
 - d) Have 1000 or more students coming from within the school district from families with incomes below the poverty level

Nebraska has identified 47 LEAs, representing both large and small school systems from all parts of the state (see Appendix G). The student populations range in size from over 45,000 to less than 50. Eligibility to apply does not mean that every LEA will be able to submit an application that will be successful in obtaining funding. An application by an LEA must demonstrate that there is capacity to carry out a strong implementation of an initiative to use scientifically research-based approaches to improve student achievement in reading. Potential applicants will need to provide evidence of such capacity, leadership, and understanding of the implications of becoming a sub-grant recipient. Of the 47 districts identified 24 of them have less than 300 students K-12 with one such district having as few as 15 students at the Elementary level. Districts with very small enrollments might not be able to muster the resources necessary to be successful. Small LEAs will be encouraged to apply as part of a consortium.

Any potential sub-grantee with more than one elementary school will also need to demonstrate how they will target schools with the highest number or percentage of K-3 students reading below grade level.

1. d. Selection Criteria for Awarding Sub-grants

Nebraska will hold local school districts to the same rigorous criteria that the Federal Department of Education has established for state grants. Schools in Nebraska will not be

awarded sub-grants without first providing information insuring they will adhere to the rigorous requirements of Reading First. Through the eligibility process defined in Section C of this proposal, Nebraska has identified a potential of 47 school districts that will be invited to apply for sub-grants.

Any applicant interested in applying for a sub-grant will be required to attend a pre-writing training outlining the specifics of Reading First. Applicants will be encouraged to send a team of representatives from the LEA. Special optional trainings on scientifically-based reading research will be offered to districts that are interested. These trainings will be held regionally across the state. Technical assistance will be provided during the grant-writing period for any applicant through telephone, e-mail or the web.

To be considered, applicants will need to address the following criteria in their proposals:

- Schools to be Served
- Instructional Assessments
- Instructional Strategies and Programs
- Instructional Materials
- Instructional Leadership
- District and School-Based Professional Development
- District-Based Technical Assistance
- Evaluation Strategies
- Access to Print Materials
- Additional Criteria
- Competitive Priorities

Once received, LEA applications will be pre-reviewed by Nebraska Department of Education staff to ensure that all required criteria have been addressed. Any application not addressing all of the required criteria will not be considered for an award.

Each of the above mentioned sub-grant selection criteria would be assigned a point value through a scoring rubric. The rubrics that will be used to score sub-grant applications follow.

1. d. i. Schools to be Served

Selection of schools to be served will be based upon the information provided by applicant, who will provide evidence of need, the rationale of the applicant for consideration of a particular school or schools, and where appropriate, prioritization by a district of schools being proposed for consideration.

Exemplary (2 points per section)	Meets Standards (1 point per section)	Does Not Meet Standards (0 points per section)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The application specifies which schools in the LEA will be a participant in the Reading First Program with a rationale for the inclusion of each building. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The application specifies which schools in the LEA will be a participant in the Reading First Program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The application does not specify schools to be included in the LEA's Reading First Program.
Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The application provides a description of how data has been used, and includes a display of the relevant data that supports the inclusion of school(s) in the program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The application provides a description of how data has been used to select the recommendation for including a school(s) in the proposal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data that helps support the application is nonexistent or is not meaningful in support of inclusion of the school(s) in the program.
Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposal provides the qualifications of the leadership personnel, which indicate knowledge and experience in scientifically-research based reading instruction practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The qualifications of the personnel who will have direct responsibility for providing leadership in the Reading First school(s) are included in the application, and include attributes that would indicate knowledge of reading instruction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The application does not provide information about the qualifications of persons who comprise the leadership of the Reading First Project.
Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____
Column Point Total: _____	Column Point Total: _____	Column Point Total: _____
Total Points Awarded for Schools to be Served: _____ (Total combined points of the 3 columns)		
Comments (optional): _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____		

1. d. ii. Instructional Assessments

Applicants will describe the school's procedures to select and administer rigorous screening, diagnostic, and classroom-based instructional assessments with proven validity and reliability that measure student progress related to the five components of reading instruction. The applicant will describe how information from these assessments will be used to make instructional decisions.

Exemplary (4 points per section)	Meets Standards (2 points per section)	Does Not Meet Standards (0 points per section)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The description identifies the three purposes of assessment- screening, diagnostic and classroom based. The selection procedure uses multiple criteria including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A comparative analysis of multiple assessments reporting a rationale for each instrument selected. Reporting both validity and reliability and reviews by experts trained in scientifically-based research and measurement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The description identifies the three purposes of assessment- screening, diagnostic and classroom-based. The selection procedure uses multiple criteria including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Reporting both validity and reliability, and reviews by experts trained in scientifically-based research and measurement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The description identifies the three purposes of assessment. However, the selection procedure: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Does not use a source reporting both validity and reliability, or reviews by experts trained in scientifically-based research and measurement.
Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant provides evidence of the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Alignment of selected assessments to the five essential components of reading instruction. Alignment of selected assessments to the LEA's reading program. Alignment of selected assessments to the Nebraska State Reading/Writing Standards or approved local standards for reading/writing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant provides evidence of the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Alignment of selected assessments to the five essential components of reading instruction. Alignment of selected assessments to the LEA's reading program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The selected assessments do not align to the five essential components of reading instruction in the LEA's reading program. The applicant makes no reference to Nebraska State Reading/Writing Standards.
Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For each assessment described, the applicant: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Provides a year-long assessment administration calendar with frequent data collection points identified. 2) Describes an assessment plan, including data collection process and schedule, as well as specific guidelines on how to use assessment results/data for instructional decisions based on scientifically-based research. 3) Provides details on how assessments are integrated into the LEA's identified reading program. 4) Assessments are aligned pre K-12 for seamless program coherence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For each assessment described, the applicant: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Provides a year-long calendar that describes the LEA's assessment administration schedule. 2) Describes an assessment plan, including data collection process and schedule, as well as specific guidelines on how to use assessment results/data for instructional decisions based on scientifically-based research. 3) Provides details on how assessments are integrated into the LEA's identified reading program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For each assessment identified: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) No details for assessment administration are provided.
Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____
Column Point Total: _____	Column Point Total: _____	Column Point Total: _____
Total Points Awarded for Instructional Assessments: _____ (Total combined points of the 3 columns)		
Comments (optional):		

1. d. iii. Instructional Strategies and Programs

Applicants will describe the key elements of the district's reading program. Applicants will document how the selected program is supported by scientifically-based reading research and will provide a summary of the research that supports its selection. The applicant will provide a description of how the program addresses the five essential components of reading instruction- phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary instruction. Each application will also show how the reading program is integrated into a coherent instructional design that addresses the following areas:

- Utilization of explicit instructional strategies based on individual student needs.
- Coordinated instructional sequences.
- Appropriate practice opportunities.
- Professional development opportunities that support effective program implementation
- Classroom implementation of a program based on current assessment data.

Exemplary (2 points per section)	Meets Standards (1 point per section)	Does Not Meet Standards (0 points per section)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The selection and implementation of a program of reading instruction is based on scientifically-based reading research and includes clearly explained instructional strategies that address the five essential components of reading instruction. The goal of the described program is to support all students as they grow to become proficient readers. Applicant uses the criteria identified in <i>A Consumer's Guide to Evaluating a Core Reading Program Grades K-3: A Critical Elements Analysis</i>- March 2003 (Appendix K) for the selection of their core reading program, or selects from the list of programs pre-established by the Materials Review Committee as meeting criteria. Applicant further agrees to discontinue any nonscientificall-based programs or practices. • Summaries of research studies are provided that support the selection of the program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The selection and implementation of a program of reading instruction is based on scientifically-based reading research and includes clearly explained instructional strategies that address the five essential components of reading instruction. The goal of the described program is to support all students as they grow to become proficient readers. Applicant uses the criteria identified in <i>A Consumer's Guide to Evaluating a Core Reading Program Grades K-3: A Critical Elements Analysis</i>- March 2003 (Appendix K) for the selection of their core reading program, or selects from the list of programs pre-established by the Materials Review Committee as meeting criteria. Applicant further agrees to discontinue any nonscientificall-based programs or practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The description of the reading program design does not address the five essential components of reading instruction. Research studies are not provided as evidence that the program is based on scientifically-based reading research.
Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The application includes a detailed description of the following six areas that address the utilization of clearly described instructional strategies, based on individual student needs, in order to support students as they learn to read grade level text: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) How the teacher will provide direct instruction for individual children or small groups with similar instructional needs (including students with special needs, English Language Learners, etc. 2) How the teacher will utilize flexible grouping patterns that are determined by current assessment data, in order to maximize student learning. 3) How the teacher will utilize reading materials and activities that promote active student engagement. 4) Assurance that the students will participate in a variety of reading activities that allow for individual student differences. 5) Evidence that the selected program and supplemental materials, that are rooted in scientifically-based reading research, are aligned to Nebraska Reading/Writing Standards. 6) Description of how the selection of program and supplemental materials are chosen based on the needs of the district's student population. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The application includes a detailed description of the following five areas that address the utilization of clearly described instructional strategies, based on individual student needs, in order to support students as they learn to read grade level text: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) How the teacher will provide direct instruction for individual children or small groups with similar instructional needs (including students with special needs, English Language Learners, etc.). 2) How the teacher will utilize flexible grouping patterns that are determined by current assessment data, in order to maximize student learning. 3) How the teacher will utilize reading materials and activities that promote active student engagement. 4) Assurance that the students will participate in a variety of reading activities that allow for individual student differences. 5) Evidence that the selected program and supplemental materials, that are rooted in scientifically-based reading research, are aligned to Nebraska Reading/Writing Standards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant does not describe how they utilize clearly described instructional strategies based on individual student needs as described in the "meets standard" column.
Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The scientifically-based reading program design includes coordinated instructional sequences, for all K-3 students that address the five essential components of reading instruction and includes a detailed description of each of the following areas with examples when appropriate: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) A description of the block of uninterrupted time for individual, small, and large group reading instruction daily, at least 90 minutes in length. 2) Utilization of teaching strategies and instructional activities that support logical and sequential skill development and that are based on students' current assessment data. 3) Teachers and students work towards clearly articulated academic goals that are aligned to the Nebraska Reading/Writing Standards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The scientifically- based reading program design includes coordinated instructional sequences, for all K-3 students that address the five essential components of reading instruction and includes a detailed description of the following areas with examples when appropriate: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) A description of the block of uninterrupted time for individual, small, and large group reading instruction daily, at least 90 minutes in length. 2) Utilization of teaching strategies and instructional activities that support logical and sequential skill development and that are based on students' current assessment data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The reading program lacks clearly articulated purposes and goals and inadequately addresses instructional sequences that address the five essential components of reading instruction as described in the "meets standard" column.
Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The reading program design includes appropriate practice opportunities for students to master skills in the five essential components of reading instruction and includes a detailed description of each of the following areas: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) How the teacher will utilize current student assessment data for effective planning. 2) How the teacher will address student's individual learning differences. 3) How the teacher will continuously monitor student progress and provide corrective feedback. 4) A clear and specific plan to use scientifically-based instructional strategies to accelerate performance and monitor progress of students who are reading below grade level. 5) A plan for students to practice learned strategies as they read and write across the curriculum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The reading program design includes appropriate practice opportunities for students to master skills in the five essential components of reading instruction and includes a description of the following areas: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) How the teacher will utilize current student assessment data for effective planning. 2) How the teacher will address student's individual learning differences. 3) How the teacher will continuously monitor student progress and provide corrective feedback. 4) A clear and specific plan to use scientifically-based instructional strategies to accelerate performance and monitor progress of students who are reading below grade level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The reading program design does not include appropriate practice opportunities for students to master skills in the five essential components of reading instruction or other practice opportunities as described in the "meets standard" column.
Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The reading program design includes assessment strategies for diagnosing student needs and measuring progress. There is a detailed description of how the information gathered from the assessments is analyzed and used for both long-term and day-to-day planning for individual students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The reading program design includes assessment strategies for diagnosing student needs and measuring progress. An assessment schedule is provided. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The reading program design does not address how the teacher will utilize assessment data for long-term and day-to-day planning for students.
Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____
Column Point Total: _____	Column Point Total: _____	Column Point Total: _____
Total Points Awarded for Instructional Strategies and Programs: _____ (Total combined points of the 3 columns)		
Comments (optional):		

1. d. iv. Instructional Materials

Applicants will explain the process for selection and use of instructional materials that support scientifically-based instructional strategies. The application will also show how instructional materials, including education technology, support effective instruction in the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension. The applicant will explain how the instructional materials selected support their local reading/writing program, which is aligned to the Nebraska Reading/Writing Standards.

Exemplary (2 points per section)	Meets Standards (1 point per section)	Does Not Meet Standards (0 points per section)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant provides evidence that they are using instructional materials that support the teaching of the five components of reading, include effective program elements such as explicit instructional strategies, a coordinated instructional sequence, ample practice opportunities and are aligned with a comprehensive reading program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant provides evidence that they are selecting and using instructional materials that support the five essential components of reading instruction based on scientifically-based reading research. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant does not demonstrate that the use of instructional materials support the five essential components of reading instruction based on scientifically-based instructional strategies.
Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant provides evidence that the instructional materials selected support the teaching of the local curriculum, which has been aligned to the Nebraska State Reading/Writing Standards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The application provides evidence that the instructional materials selected are integrated and coordinated with their comprehensive reading program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant does not provide evidence that the instructional materials selected are integrated and coordinated with their comprehensive reading program.
Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant provides evidence that a variety of scientifically supported instructional materials are being used for their intended purposes. The use of those materials is individualized to meet the needs of all students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant provides evidence that they are using instructional materials for their intended purposes (e.g. supplemental, intervention) and are appropriate to the student's instructional level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant does not provide evidence that the instructional materials selected are being used for their intended purposes and are not appropriate to the student's instructional level.
Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____
Column Point Total: _____	Column Point Total: _____	Column Point Total: _____
Total Points Awarded for Instructional Materials: _____ (Total combined points of the 3 columns)		
Comments (optional):		

1. d. v. Instructional Leadership

Applicants will explain the leadership components of their Reading First project that will result in the successful implementation of a reading instruction program designed to insure achievement success for all children.

Exemplary (4 points per section)	Meets Standards (2 points per section)	Does Not Meet Standards (0 points per section)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal meets all conditions listed under "Meets Standards." Proposal demonstrates how those in leadership positions will exercise their authority and in evaluation, analysis, curriculum alignment activities to facilitate continuous and consistent progress toward project goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal provides a plan for leadership of the adoption of the Reading First principles, including plans for district and building-level activities for teacher training, materials selection, and program evaluation. Plan includes duties and responsibilities of the leadership personnel, their expertise, and availability of time sufficient to the needs of Reading First implementation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposal provides a leadership plan for the Reading First program that does not meet the level of "Meets Standards." The plan is not developed to the point of activities, materials, training, and evaluation.
Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal provides specific qualifications of individuals who will provide leadership, along with the capabilities and skills, traits, and background experiences that indicate their fitness for their positions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal provides information regarding qualifications of internal sources of leadership that will indicate capability to provide direction and coaching in the Reading First. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal doesn't provide qualifications of the leadership for the Reading First project.
Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal describes the plan for professional development that is comprehensive in the scope of scientifically-based reading research, and is sufficiently focused and intensive to produce lasting growth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal addresses the training issues involved in developing persons in leadership roles (principals, reading coaches) to have the knowledge about scientifically-based reading research, to develop expertise in coaching, and strengthen the ability to manage the project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal does not provide for training of all persons who have leadership roles in the Reading First process, including teacher-leaders, principals, and district-level consultants.
Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____
Column Point Total: _____	Column Point Total: _____	Column Point Total: _____
Total Points Awarded for Instructional Leadership: _____ (Total combined points of the 3 columns)		
Comments (optional):		

1. d. vi. District and School-Based Professional Development

Applicants will describe and provide examples of how their school district will:

- Provide high-quality and results-based professional development that will effectively improve instructional practices and student achievement and ensure that all students are reading by the end of third grade.
- Provide evidence that the professional development is designed to include all of the essential components of scientifically-based reading research: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, fluency including oral reading skills, and reading comprehension strategies, as well as skills that will improve teacher management skills, organizational skills and assessment/evaluation skills.
- Coordinate professional development efforts with federal, state and local initiatives, and demonstrate alignment with existing classroom reading programs and materials.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the professional development program.

Exemplary (4 points per section)	Meets Standards (2 points per section)	Does Not Meet Standards (0 points per section)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan includes a full range of varied experiences for professional development involving all K-3 classroom teachers, administrators and special education teachers, that is ongoing and continuous with designated times for follow-up activities. Specific plans for coaching and mentoring are listed including plans to utilize feedback from outside experts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan specifies a clear process with multiple on-going opportunities for professional development involving all K-3 classroom teachers and all special education teachers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan does not include professional development that is ongoing.
Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan for professional development includes content, instructional practice and classroom application in all of the five essential components identified by scientifically-based reading research as well as skill development in the areas of management, organization, early intervention, classroom reading materials, and remedial programs/approaches. Plan describes the district's means for assessing the specific professional development needs of their teachers and designing professional development around those specific needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan identifies a process for intense professional development including content and instructional practice in all of the five essential components of reading instruction identified by scientifically-based reading research, as well as management and organizational skill development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional development does not include content in all of the five essential components of reading instruction identified by scientifically-based reading research.
Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional development provides intensive and focused training in the use screening, diagnostic, and classroom-based reading assessments and includes a plan to interpret in-class assessment results to plan instruction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional development provides for intensive and focused training in the use of screening, diagnostic, and classroom-based reading assessments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional development does not address instruction in the use of screening, diagnostic, and classroom-based reading assessments.
Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan addresses initial preparation of teachers to implement scientifically-based reading research programs, assessments, and instructional strategies. Plan describes how teachers will be supported in an on-going manner, and how sessions will be adapted to meet individual participant needs. Plan also allows adequate time for learning and implementing scientifically-based reading instruction, including time for study, observation, practice, application, and evaluation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan addresses initial preparation of teachers and on-going support to implement new scientifically-based reading research programs, assessments, and instructional strategies. It also provides for demonstration lessons, coaching, and/or mentoring. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan does not address initial preparation and/or on-going support.
Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan provides evidence that professional development will be provided by individuals highly knowledgeable in scientifically-based reading research. The district expresses a willingness to participate in Nebraska Reading Institutes and regional follow-up and networking sessions provided by the Cadre. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan demonstrates how professional development will be provided by individuals highly knowledgeable in scientifically-based reading research and experienced in program implementation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The plan does not assurance that professional development will be provided by individuals knowledgeable in scientifically-based reading research.
Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is on-going support and training provided to individuals assigned to train, coach, or mentor teachers implementing designated programs and strategies. The district expresses a willingness to participate in Nebraska Reading Institutes and regional follow-up and networking sessions provided by the Cadre. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan describes how those serving as trainers and coaches will receive on-going support and training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The plan gives no evidence of on-going support and training for coaches and trainers.
Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan shows specific alignment with state/local reading/writing standards, a comprehensive reading program, and the STARS assessment system. It specifically describes how professional development integrates with local school improvement plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional development plan describes how scientifically-based reading strategies can be incorporated into the Nebraska Standards and the STARS assessment system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional development plan does not describe alignment with state/local reading/writing standards.
Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan also describes how teachers will be supported in an on-going manner including the district's means for assessing the specific professional development needs of teachers and designing professional development around those specific needs. It further describes how sessions may be adapted to meet individual participants needs by targeting assistance if necessary with built in time for study, observation, practice, application and evaluation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan also describes how teachers will be supported in an on-going manner including the district's means for assessing the specific professional development needs of teachers and designing professional development around those specific needs. It further describes how sessions may be adapted to meet individual participants needs by targeting assistance if necessary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No mention of tailoring professional development based on district needs or specific targeted assistance to those in need.
Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____
Column Point Total: _____	Column Point Total: _____	Column Point Total: _____
Total Points Awarded for District and School-Based Professional Development: _____ (Total combined points of the 3 columns)		
Comments (optional):		

1. d. vii. District-Based Technical Assistance

Applicant will design and implement a district-based technical assistance program that will ensure strong infrastructure for the development of effective Reading First projects.

Exemplary (4 points per section)	Meets Standards (2 points per section)	Does Not Meet Standards (0 points per section)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal meets all conditions of "Meets Standards." Proposals will include specific professional development plans to meet needs of individual schools, assistance in helping schools with setting benchmarks and goals, and establishing realistic budgets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposal includes a plan for providing high quality technical assistance from the LEA, through direct assistance or through coordination with SEA or external resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposal does not provide a sufficient plan for technical assistance to schools participating in the Reading First Program.
Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal will include names and qualifications of those who will provide technical assistance to the Reading First schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposal details how the LEA will provide technical assistance to schools in evaluating their Reading First programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposal does not provide details about who will provide the district level technical assistance, or what services could be provided.
Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____
Column Point Total: _____	Column Point Total: _____	Column Point Total: _____
Total Points Awarded for District-Based Technical Assistance: _____ (Total combined points of the 3 columns)		
Comments (optional):		

1. d. viii. Evaluation Strategies

Applicant will describe how they will utilize valid and reliable assessments, DIBELS, GORT-4, PPVT-3rd Edition, and Gates-MacGinitie, in order to show achievement at the individual student, building, and district level, for K-3 students. Applicant will describe how it will report reading achievement data disaggregated by low-income, major racial/ethnic groups, LEP, and special education for Reading First schools. The applicant also has a clear plan for making decisions related to their Reading First program based on evaluation outcomes, including intervention with and/or discontinuation of schools not making significant progress.

Exemplary (5 points per section)	Meets Standards (3 point per section)	Does Not Meet Standards (0 points per section)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LEA describes a clear evaluation plan that will document the effectiveness of local Reading First activities for individual schools and the LEA as a whole. Plan reflects that LEA's intent to administer valid and reliable assessments, DIBELS, GORT-4, PPVT-3rd Edition, and Gates-MacGinitie, in order to show achievement in the five essential components of reading instruction. The LEA's plan demonstrates how it will manage data collection at both building and district levels. LEA demonstrates how Reading First assessments are aligned to the Nebraska STARS process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LEA describes a clear evaluation plan that will document the effectiveness of local Reading First activities for individual schools and the LEA as a whole. Plan reflects the LEA's intent to administer valid and reliable assessments, DIBELS, GORT-4, PPVT-3rd Edition, and Gates-MacGinitie (Appendix J), in order to show achievement in the five essential components of reading instruction. The LEA's plan demonstrates how it will manage data collection at both the building and district levels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LEA does not insure that they will utilize valid and reliable assessments, DIBELS, GORT-4, PPVT-3rd Edition, and Gates Mac-Ginitie, in order to show individual student achievement in the five essential components of reading instruction. The plan does not demonstrate how data will be managed at both the building and district levels.
Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEA describes how it will report reading achievement data disaggregated by low-income, major racial/ethnic groups, LEP, and special education for K-3 students in Reading First schools. LEA shows how this report is aligned to their district's school improvement plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEA describes how it will report reading achievement data disaggregated by low-income, major racial/ethnic groups, LEP, and special education for K-3 students in Reading First schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEA does not describe how they will report reading achievement data that is disaggregated by low-income, major racial/ethnic groups, LEP, and special education for K-3 students in Reading First schools.
Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEA has a clear plan for making decisions related to their Reading First programs based on evaluation outcomes, including intervention with and/or discontinuation of schools not making significant progress. LEA assures participation in the evaluation process specified in Nebraska's Reading First evaluation plan. LEA has outlined measures to identify individual students needing supplemental or intervention support, and their plan to provide resources to insure progress for all K-3 students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEA has a clear plan for making decisions related to their Reading First program based on evaluation outcomes, including intervention with and/or discontinuation of schools not making significant progress. LEA assures participation in the evaluation process specified in Nebraska's Reading First evaluation plan including participation in the national evaluation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEA lacks a clear plan for making decisions based on evaluation outcomes, including interventions with and/or discontinuation of schools not making significant progress.
Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____
Column Point Total: _____	Column Point Total: _____	Column Point Total: _____
<p align="center">Total Points Awarded for Evaluation Strategies: _____</p> <p align="center">(Total combined points of the 3 columns)</p>		
Comments (optional):		

1. d. ix. Access to Print Materials

Applicants will describe the ways in which their school promotes reading and library programs by:

- Providing student access to wide array of engaging reading materials including both expository and narrative texts.
- Providing access to a variety of print size options as well as texts that reflect the languages and cultures of the community.
- Encouraging and coordinating community support of school library programs and existing library/media initiatives.

Exemplary (2 points per section)	Meets Standards (1 point per section)	Does Not Meet Standards (0 points per section)
<p>The applicant describes a Reading First classroom environment which promotes reading in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom library contains materials to expand content learning at multiple levels and print size options. • School communication with the community reflects language(s) and culture of the community including classroom materials. • Plan for updating and maintaining classroom materials that aligns to standards and research-based reading components. • Applicant provides evidence of support for reading activities outside the classroom that promote motivation to read e.g. summer reading programs and book fairs. • Student authored stories are published and available to others. 	<p>The applicant describes a Reading First classroom environment which promotes reading in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom library contains both fiction and non-fiction at multiple levels. • Classroom materials reflect language(s) and culture of the community. • Classroom materials are selected at random or donated. • Applicant provides evidence of support for classroom reading opportunities e.g. reading buddies, grandparent reading time, and personal reading goals. • Student writings reflect the total reading program. 	<p>The applicant describes a Reading First classroom environment that is limited in its ability to promote reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited classroom collection of materials. • Classroom materials do not reflect language(s) and culture of the community. • No district/building plan to update classroom materials. • Lack support for reading program beyond the classroom. • Student writing is not part of the total reading program.
Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____
<p>The applicant describes a Reading First school library environment which promotes reading in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School library provides extended resources like CD ROMs, videos, audiotapes, and periodicals; internet access; and extended hours with staff to assist students and community members to promote family literacy. 	<p>The applicant describes a Reading First school library environment which promotes reading in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School library has a plan for updating materials, interloan system, accessible to students and coordination with the school's total reading program. 	<p>The applicant describes a Reading First school library environment that is limited in its ability to promote reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School library has outdated materials and/or limited resources and hours.
Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____	Points Awarded: _____

<p>The educators in a Reading First school promote community support for reading in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading materials are purchased for individual students by community members/organization to assist with equal access at home. • Plan, purchase and place literacy materials in areas of community access for adults and children, e.g. birth-PreK audience at doctor offices. <p>Points Awarded: _____</p>	<p>The educators in a Reading First school promote community support for reading in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School-based plan to purchase personal reading materials for students especially those in most need. • School/Business partnerships are established to expand access to quality literacy materials. <p>Points Awarded: _____</p>	<p>The applicant describes a Reading First school/classroom environment that does not promote community support for reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack school/community support to gain personal access to reading materials. • Lack community/business support of literacy resources that are limited to public access. <p>Points Awarded: _____</p>
Column Point Total: _____	Column Point Total: _____	Column Point Total: _____
<p>Total Points Awarded for Access to Print Materials: _____ (Total combined points of the 3 columns)</p>		
<p>Comments (optional):</p>		

1. d. x. Additional Criteria

The additional criteria section was eliminated.

1. d. xi. Competitive Priorities

Competitive priority points will be awarded as listed below to LEAs that meet specific criteria:

- + 10 points Districts in which at least 15% of the students served in the LEA are from families with incomes below the poverty line or at least 6,500 children in the LEA are from families with incomes below the poverty line.
- + 3 points Districts that demonstrate a plan for successful implementation of instructional strategies and programs based on scientifically-based reading research.
- + 1 points Proposals that clearly demonstrate the leadership capacity of the district and eligible schools within that district to implement a comprehensive Reading First program, including the required implementation of instructional strategies and programs based on scientifically-based research.
- +1 points Proposal provides evidence of leveraging existing resources with Reading First Funds to maximize effectiveness
- +4 points Proposal is submitted by a consortium of school districts, each of which individually meets the eligibility requirements, impacting a total student population of at least 300 students

1. e. Process for Awarding Sub-Grants

Nebraska has identified 47 school districts that will be eligible to apply for Reading First funding. The LEAs range in size from over 45,000 students to fewer than 50 students. The LEAs are located in all geographic areas of the state. Immediately upon official approval of this application from the USDE a letter will be sent to these districts notifying them of their eligibility and inviting them to a pre-writing workshop.

Any district choosing to apply will be required to attend a pre-writing workshop outlining the specifics of Reading First as well as scientifically-based reading research. They will be encouraged to send a team of representatives from the LEA to one of four regional locations. Additional technical assistance will be provided during the grant-writing period for any applicant via telephone, e-mail or the web.

Nebraska will award sub-grants to eligible LEAs on a competitive basis. A scoring rubric, based on the selection criteria, has been developed with graduated point values. This rubric will distinguish the quality programs and approaches from those that will not produce desirable results. Only those proposals supporting scientifically-based reading research and showing the most promise for raising student achievement and successful implementation will receive funding through Reading First.

The awards will be of sufficient size and scope to enable LEAs to truly improve reading instruction. It is estimated that Nebraska will award from 18-22 grants, with monetary amounts based on the size of the LEA and the number of students impacted in each identified Reading First school ranging from \$85,000 - \$125,000 per year for three years.

The size of a grant award will be based upon the amount needed for additional personnel, instructional materials, assessment materials, professional development expenses, supplemental texts, evaluation activities, and external service providers, (i.e. persons from outside the school district with the ability to provide training in the use of scientifically research-based reading practices). Funds may not be used to supplant expenses that are the customary responsibility of a school district.

Applicants will be advised that when preparing a budget they should give consideration to the numbers of teachers, students, and buildings involved in their application. They will be encouraged to think about their capabilities to combine personnel resources to serve multiple buildings in leadership, coaching, and professional development whenever possible and to realistically plan for the non-contract time needed to effectively implement the Reading First Project.

Out of the 47 districts identified as potential grantees, 24 of them have less than 300 students K-12. The smallest eligible district has 15 students in grades K-6. The pre-writing workshops will stress the benefits of small LEAs applying as consortia, including the likelihood of being able to demonstrate a capacity for success throughout the rigorous application process.

Each sub-grant awarded will not be less than the percentage of dollars that the LEA received from Title I Part A during the previous fiscal year. In turn, LEAs will need to show how they will distribute the funding sufficiently to eligible schools to implement effective reading programs. Example: Omaha Public Schools received 28.6% of the total Title I allocation, so the amount of the Reading First Grant must be at least \$696,000.

Submitted applications will first be reviewed by NDE personnel to determine that the potential awardees meet the basic requirements and qualifications of Reading First with regard to timeliness of submission, completeness of the application, and assurance that the corresponding private schools have been apprised of their opportunities to participate. They will also check to see that all federal and state assurance statements pertaining to Reading First have been signed and included.

A review panel comprised of readers from the Nebraska Department of Education, Educational Service Units, reading specialists, and institutions of higher education will be convened. Priority will be given to reviewers who demonstrate strong knowledge of scientifically-based reading research. The panel will be trained in requirements of Reading First in addition to the criteria of the scoring rubric utilizing explicit examples to assure consistency in scoring and gain a shared meaning of the proposed proficiency levels of “Exemplary” “Meets Standards” and “Does Not Meet Standards.” Two reviewers will score each application separately. Competitive priority points will be assigned, if applicable. If the scores are not adjacent, a third reviewer will be called upon to review and score the proposal. The full expert review panel will make the final

decision on the preliminary awards to ensure that there is overall geographic and small school representation. Any applicant that does not receive at least a “meets standard” rating in every category of the Reading First rubrics will **not** be considered for funding. The review process will be divided into two phases. During the first round of reviews, up to 75% of the subgrant dollars will be awarded. Districts not receiving funding will be invited to resubmit, based on the reviewers comments, and will be offered additional technical assistance. The second phase of the review process will be conducted within six weeks of the date of the first review, utilizing the same reviewers. At this time, any application not meeting all of the Reading First requirements by scoring at least “meets standard ” in every category will not be eligible for funding.

As stated above, Nebraska Reading First anticipates from 18-22 grants being awarded during the first year of funding. After the first three years of the federal grant, pending approval of Nebraska’s progress and continued funding, a statewide invitation will again go out to eligible schools. The entire sub-grant process, including the pre-writing workshops, the grant reviewer trainings, etc., will be conducted.

Those receiving the top scores will be notified of site visits. LEAs that receive preliminary awards will receive a site visit by Nebraska Department of Education personnel who will verify the information in the application and determine the capacity of the LEA to accomplish what has been proposed. The visits will occur on site when possible, and through distance technology when necessary.

1. f. State Professional Development Plan

All K-3 teachers statewide, as well as K-12 special education teachers, are eligible to attend professional development through Reading First—approximately 8000 teachers in total. Although some teachers in Reading First grantee schools will attend professional development through their local sub-grants, state-level investment in Reading First assures the potential to reach teachers statewide. Initial professional development will focus on the essential components of reading instruction, phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, reading comprehension strategies, and the use of scientifically-based instructional materials, strategies and programs. On-going professional development and technical assistance will include follow-up sessions with further training in screening, diagnostic, and classroom-based assessments.

As teachers learn the process of analyzing their reading data, they will gain an understanding of how to target specific instruction for intervention. Along with teacher follow-ups, administrators will have continued training and support in supervising scientifically-based programs.

Nebraska has long used the research of Joyce and Showers on effective staff development practices, which has proven that simple training is not enough. It must be reinforced and sustained by finding time for practice, demonstration, feedback, and follow-up sessions. In June of 1998, Nebraska State Board of Education adopted a staff development policy and model to assure that staff development is systematic and organized (see Appendix H). Over the past several years, a strong collaborative relationship has developed between the Nebraska Department of Education, local school districts, Educational Service Units, and institutions of higher education. This relationship will serve as the basis for Reading First activities.

The major components of Nebraska's Reading First professional development program will be:

- Teacher training institutes
- On-going implementation and support through local and regional follow-up training and networking sessions

The Reading First Teacher Training Institutes will consist of intensive three-day workshops held regionally with specialized pre-institute sessions required for some participants. The follow-up trainings and networking sessions will be held quarterly. Annually, at least one of these sessions will be two days in length and provided on a regional basis allowing for additional in-depth training and technical assistance.

Capacity Building

The ultimate success of Reading First will be directly dependent on the leadership within Nebraska. This leadership must initiate, implement, and sustain the program in local school districts. Professional development and training will build system-wide capacity on several different levels. A statewide infrastructure will be developed starting with a Statewide Coordinating and Training Cadre (the Cadre) Vitae are listed in Appendix O. This Cadre will be comprised of a full time Project Coordinator, Five Regional Trainers, the NDE Reading Director and 5-7 additional representatives listed in the State Management Plan listed on pages 80-81. Up to 60 Reading coaches (Reading Coaches) will be identified regionally and/or locally. These coaches may be representatives of the Educational Service Units, identified at the district level in the larger districts, and/or shared among smaller districts. In order to qualify for funding, every grantee school must have a designated Reading Coach assigned to work with their

teachers. Non-grantee districts, before participating in the Reading Institutes, will be asked to identify a coach as well. At the individual building level, principals/administrators, local Lead Teachers, and classroom teachers will complete the different facets of the infrastructure. Grantee schools must agree to designate at least a part-time Lead Teacher in the smaller buildings and a full-time Lead Teacher in the larger buildings. Non-grantee schools must designate a Lead Teacher prior to attending the Reading First Institutes. In some districts, particularly in small LEAs, the designated Reading Coach may serve other roles as well such as the Lead Teacher or administrator. Reading Coaches, administrators, and Lead Teachers will all receive specialized training before attending the Reading First Institutes and will be expected to attend quarterly networking meetings and follow-up trainings. In addition, a designated Expert Panel, comprised of consultants at the national level, will provide training and technical assistance to the total process.

Each person in the infrastructure will have a specific role to play. Members will serve as local leaders, facilitators, coaches and mentors to insure the success of every child reading on grade level before the end of third grade (see following matrix).

Statewide Infrastructure Roles for Professional Development

	Teacher Training Institutes			On-Going Implementation and Support		
Role of:	Preparation/ Pre-Training	Awareness	Skill Building	Implementation	Evaluation	Sustainability
Expert Panel	Train and provide expertise	Provide technical assistance	Provide consultative and training expertise	Provide technical assistance	Provide technical assistance	Provide technical assistance and training expertise
Statewide Reading Coordinating + Training Cadre	Participate in intensive training on SBR; develop and coordinate statewide activities for training	Provide/facilitate training	Provide/facilitate training for regional trainers, coaches, and administrators in SBRR instruction, programs, and assessment	Provide technical assistance; serve as mentors/coaches Monitor and guide grantee schools	Assist/facilitate evaluation Develop a management process for gathering data and plan for reporting	Provide technical assistance; serve as mentor/coaches Develop management system to be used beyond the grant cycle
Reading Coaches	Provide technical assistance in coaching for Lead Teachers and classroom teachers in reading strategies	Provide awareness sessions for principals and Lead Teachers	Meet with district Lead Teachers and reading teams to reinforce instructional strategies and assessments based on reading research	Coach teachers and provide technical assistance in research-based practices to insure fidelity of programs, instructional strategies and assessments	Provide assistance in collecting, managing, and analyzing district data Monitor districts' implementation	Continued coaching and modeling for instruction and assessment methods aligned to school improvement plans Help in the management of data (collecting, analyzing, and setting up interventions)
School Principals/ Administrators	Principals Cadre – pre-reading/study of scientifically-based researched reading practices	Support and participate in pre-institute awareness session for administrators and leadership sessions	Participate in institutes with reading teams to increase the capacity of teacher teams to ensure further implementation	Support/facilitate and participate in on-going follow-up sessions; supervise to support SBRR practices in the classroom at the local level	Participate in and assist with internal and external evaluation; assist with collection of district data	Support and supervise an on-going SBR reading program Align SBR with grades 4-12 in school improvement efforts for improving reading at all levels

Lead Teachers	Coordinate awareness sessions at the local level and lead study sessions with material from the National Reading Panel and Put Reading First Documents	Provide pre-institute awareness sessions and schedule study team meetings; disseminate materials and updates to reading team members	Participate in and assist with reading institute training; serve as team chair for program coordination at the building level	Conduct on-going follow-up sessions; serve as mentor to local teachers; lead on-site reading team meeting; meet and network with regional Reading Coaches and other Lead Teachers (bi-yearly meetings)	Participate in and assist with evaluation, collect district data, provide feedback for evaluation data from UNL evaluation team	Provide technical assistance, serve as mentor for reading teachers at the local district Coordinate SBR into school improvement action plans Coordinate on-going professional development in K-12 reading initiatives at the local level
Classroom Teachers	Pre-reading sessions with material from the National Reading Panel and Put Reading First Documents	Attend pre-reading institute awareness sessions	Participate with school team in training – Nebraska Reading First Institutes	Implement SBR in classroom; instructional strategies and assessments aligned to SBR	Participate in evaluation, collect classroom data, review data to make informed instructional decisions	Sustain changes in classroom practices aligned to SBR Participate in school improvement activities and professional development efforts as district improve reading all students K-12

Different skills will be required for various roles that people will fill within the statewide infrastructure. Professional development will be specifically tailored for each different facet of the infrastructure. The professional development listed below shows the variation of trainings provided for each specific facet of Reading First.

Statewide Reading, Coordinating and Training Cadre (12 –15 members)

The Cadre members will be the primary trainers for the rest of the infrastructure. The Cadre will be comprised of the Project Director, The Five Regional Trainers, NDE Representatives, Representatives from at least four Grantee schools and Representatives from Higher Education. They will be charged with ongoing study in current research and applications of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary development and comprehension of texts. They will attend trainings and receive consultation from the Expert Panel in the following areas so that they will be able to design and deliver trainings and materials to Nebraska educators:

Components for Effective Learning in Reading

- Research that supports the five components
- Instructional strategies appropriate for each level (K-3) and aligned to the five reading components and the Nebraska Reading/Writing standards
- Study and review of assessments designated for screening and diagnosing students needs and achievement
- Materials alignment and selection methods and processes
- Lesson design
- Reading classroom management
- Monitoring student progress and adjusting instruction as a result of data analysis
- Reporting to parents, students, community, state and federal agencies
- Partnerships with parents in creating the home/school connection

Data Collection and Evaluation

- Aligning assessment data collection with the Nebraska School Improvement Process or North Central Accreditation process
- Collecting and reporting district and state results to stakeholders
- Effective evaluation practices and fidelity checks

Supportive Leadership

- Indicators and attributes of effective leaders
- Leadership roles in the school improvement process
- Change theory
- Capacity building for collaborative teams
- Creating an environment that promotes mastery learning

Coaching/Mentoring

- Working with adult learners and individual teachers

- Principles of effective peer coaching
- Mentor/mentee support systems

Reading Coaches (Approximately 60)

Reading Coaches will be designated for every grantee school. These coaches may be representatives of the Educational Service Units, identified at the district level in the larger districts, and/or shared among smaller districts. Coaches are critical in supporting teachers to ensure implementation of effective reading practices with scientifically-based reading programs. They will receive special and additional training in coaching, mentoring, and monitoring implementation of programs as they work with classroom teachers by supporting and modeling instructional strategies in reading; selecting and administering assessments matched to screening, diagnosing, progress monitoring, or assessing specific outcomes; developing a system for collecting, analyzing and reporting K-3 reading data; and coordinating the changing reading environment. Reading First grantees will be required to identify the Reading Coaches for their district prior to receiving funding. Non-grantee schools may have on-going coaching support through their staff development personnel at regional ESUs. The Reading Coaches will support and sustain scientifically-based research among K-3 reading classrooms. All Reading Coaches, whether Reading First grantees or statewide professional development, will be a part of the leadership training and quarterly meetings to ensure systematic delivery of support across the state. Principles of effective professional development practices and support have been documented in several recent publications such as the Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read (National Reading Panel), Every Child Reading: A Professional Development Guide (Learning First Alliance), Every Child Reading: An Action Plan of the Learning First Alliance (Learning First Alliance), and Teaching Reading is Rocket Science (Moats). The Nebraska Reading First efforts will draw upon these resources in training Reading Coaches as they lead teacher teams and provide consistent support for scientifically-based research practices in reading. Training and follow-ups for Reading Coaches will include the following:

Reading Coaches:

- **Intensive Training on the components of SBRR**
 1. The five essential components for effective reading
 2. Research behind the components
 3. The five components and the Nebraska standards
 4. Instructional strategies for reading
 5. Screening assessments and diagnosing student's abilities and needs

6. Selection of effective materials based on student needs
7. Monitoring and adjusting of instruction and intervention based on data from reading assessments

- **Assessment Training**

1. DIBELS, GORT-4, and Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-3rd Edition
2. Administration of assessments and analysis of the data
3. Managing and reporting data

- **Leadership**

1. Change theory
2. Team building
3. Building a school culture for learning
4. Principles of effective staff development

- **Data Collection and Evaluation**

1. Action research at the classroom level
2. Collecting and reporting district results to parents, public, and state and federal agencies
3. Principles and purposes of effective evaluation
4. Evaluation of effective materials and fidelity checks

- **Coaching/Mentoring**

1. How to model effective instructional strategies
2. Working with individual teachers
3. Principles of effective coaching/mentoring
4. Guiding teachers through data analysis and determining next steps

Principals/Administrators (Determined by school size)

Effective professional development for a comprehensive reading initiative must include strong instructional leadership from local administration and reading specialists. Everyone in the school community must be involved with improving reading, but without support and direction from the leadership team at the building level these efforts may falter. Through Reading First, building leaders will participate in training for supervising scientifically-based researched reading programs. Reading First initiatives will flourish if the environment is cultivated by making necessary changes in program selection, instructional methods, scheduled time for reading team meetings, district reading assessment plans, and reporting progress of students to parents. Effective evaluation and supervision support a coordinated plan as classroom teachers provide specific intervention for all levels of readers. Regional network meetings will offer principals/administrators the opportunity to meet with the Cadre, Reading Coaches, and on occasion, the Expert Panel for updates and ongoing support for leading in a scientifically-based era. Training and follow-ups for principal/administrators will include:

School Building Principals/ Administrators:

- **Components of SBR**

1. Five essential components of reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary instruction.
2. The five components and the Nebraska Standards
3. Screening assessments and diagnosing student's abilities and needs
4. Utilization of explicit instructional strategies based on individual student needs
5. Classroom implementation based on current assessment data

- **Assessment training**

1. Supervision of assessments
2. Setting up a schedule for administering assessments
3. Coordinating assessment meetings with classroom teachers, Title I and Special Education
4. Ensuring consistent guidelines for administering the assessments
5. Providing a systematic plan for managing assessment data
6. Reporting data results to school board, parents, school improvement steering committee, K-12 staff, and state reporting

- **Leadership**

1. Change theory
2. Team building; creating functional school teams
3. Building a school culture for learning
4. Principles of effective staff development

- **Data Collection and Evaluation**

1. Action research at the classroom level
2. Collecting and reporting district results to parents, public, and state and federal agencies
3. Principles and purposes of effective evaluation
4. Evaluation of effective materials and fidelity checks

- **Supervising in a SBR setting**

1. Classroom observation skills; what to look for in a classroom using SBR
2. Coordination of schedules to provide time for coaching, mentoring, and professional development

Lead Teachers from Grantee Schools (Determined by Local – Approximately 40)

Lead Teacher from Non-grantee Schools (Determined by Local District - Up to 160/yr)

Lead Teachers will be required in Reading First Schools. Lead teachers in non-grantee schools will be required prior to attendance at Reading First Institutes. They will be designated full-time or part-time depending on the number of teachers in their schools. Effective program

implementation can be sustained if critical structures are in place and teachers are able to gain quick and efficient support at the local level. On-site Lead Teachers will provide the day-to-day support in research-based practices, types of assessments, and reviewing learner data, matching resources to specific needs of readers, and coordinating reading team meetings. Scheduling uninterrupted reading time and instruction is critical for improving reading achievement. Therefore, Lead Teachers will work together with building administrators to ensure that blocks of time are established to accommodate learning. During the three-year grant cycle, Lead Teachers will meet with Reading Coaches and Cadre members throughout the year. These networking sessions will provide Lead Teachers with updates and training in guiding local district reading teams as they implement research-based strategies in the reading classroom. Lead Teachers will be able to provide a leadership role at reading team meetings and provide feedback to teachers when immediate support is needed for implementing scientifically-based reading programs. The Lead Teachers will also play an integral role in coordinating assessment practices and leading discussion regarding those students who may need further intervention time beyond the core reading program in the regular classroom. The Lead Teacher training and follow-ups will include:

Lead Teachers at Building Level

- Components of SBR
 1. Five essential components of reading instruction-phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary instruction.
 2. The five components and the Nebraska Standards
 3. Screening assessments and diagnosing student's abilities and needs
 4. Utilization of explicit instructional strategies based on individual student needs
 5. Classroom implementation based on current assessment data
- Leadership
 1. Change theory
 2. Team building; creating functional school teams
 3. Building a school culture for learning
 4. Principles of effective staff development
- Data Collection and Evaluation
 1. Action research at the classroom level
 2. Collecting, analyzing and managing classroom data
 3. Adjusting practices based on the current assessment data
 4. Collecting and reporting district results to parents, public, and state and federal agencies
 5. Principles and purposes of effective evaluation
 6. Evaluation of effective materials and fidelity checks

Classroom Teachers (Approximately 1200/year)

Classroom teachers are the key to every child reading by the end of third grade. All K-3 and special needs teachers will participate in awareness sessions, teacher training institutes and on-going follow-up sessions. Extensive training in the five components will ensure that teachers from all areas of the school building use research proven methods and effective instructional strategies to meet the needs of diverse learners.

Teacher Training Institutes

The cornerstone of all professional development in Nebraska will be Nebraska Reading First Teacher Training Institutes. These sessions will involve three-day intensive trainings for grantee and non-grantee schools with additional pre-institute time built in on the front end for Reading Coaches, Lead Teachers, and building administrators. Throughout the six years of the grant, all Nebraska K-3 classroom teachers, as well as K-12 Resource and Title I teachers, will be eligible to attend one of several regional locations throughout Nebraska each year. The sessions will be offered each summer and all K-3 teachers will be invited to participate.

Awareness Sessions

Prior to attendance at an institute, all participants will be involved in awareness sessions highlighting scientifically-based research in reading and effective instructional practices for teachers and administrators. Collaborative study and review will create a shared knowledge and vision for developing sound reading programs for K-3 students. Building principals, Lead Teachers, and classroom teacher teams will establish a learning environment for in-depth teambuilding and, furthermore, for developing a systematic approach to deal with the variety of learner needs.

Multiple delivery systems will be used to accommodate the needs of local districts across the state. On-line and on-site study team modules/sessions, developed by the Cadre and centered around Put Reading First – The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read (Armbruster, Leyhr, and Osborn) will provide background knowledge to build basic understanding focused on the five components for reading improvement.

Nebraska's distance learning connection, satellite access, and internet capabilities will also network districts together in a manner where a team approach flourishes. Rural Nebraska has many smaller districts that are somewhat isolated from each other. Therefore, the awareness

sessions will provide a shared vocabulary and focus in preparation for teachers as they come together at regional sites for summer reading institutes. Nebraska will use the established structure of Educational Service Units to pull together resources and to provide support and training for rural schools.

Teacher Awareness Sessions Via Online or On-Site Study Teams

The Cadre will utilize the following resources in developing the Awareness Training Modules:

Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA) and National Institute for Literacy (NIFL), Put Reading First – The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read (Armbruster, Leyhr, and Osborn).

Components of Reading Instruction that Work

Review the Research

Phonemic Awareness Instruction

- Oral rhymes and Alliteration
- Syllables in spoken words
- Onsets and rimes in spoken syllables or one-syllable words
- Phoneme oddity tasks
- Phoneme blending
- Phoneme segmentation
- Phoneme manipulation

Phonetic Principles

- Letter-sound association
- Sound-spelling
- Direct, explicit instruction
- Approaches to phonics instruction

Fluency Instruction

- Bridge between word recognition and comprehension
- Accurate, automatic, and with expression
- Repeated readings

Vocabulary Instruction

- Oral, reading, and listening vocabulary
- Word instruction
- Word meaning
- Words in context

Text Comprehension

- Comprehension Strategies
- Levels of comprehension
- Using graphic and semantic organizers
- Story structures
- Summarizing

Pre-Institute Trainings for Principals and Reading Coaches

Instructional leadership is critical for the sake of developing systematic approaches in order to sustain best practices while monitoring and adjusting the curriculum, assessment, and instruction. Special training sessions specific to the needs of principals and Reading Coaches/Lead Teachers will be held the two days preceding the three day institutes to gain

skills in the area of coaching, supervising, collecting and analyzing data, and supporting adult learners in their pursuit of improving reading skills. Day one will focus on leadership skills, research-based practices, decisions based on data analysis, and change issues as districts construct and reinforce quality, reading programs. Day two will build on coaching strategies, providing technical assistance, and teambuilding. Both sessions will address the importance of connecting the essential components of reading to gathering data through an efficient plan of action. Principals and coaches will be encouraged to assist teachers in reflecting and reviewing their practices as it relates to research-based practices. An appraisal system will include supervision of a comprehensive reading program, supervision of reading instruction, and supervision of assessment and reporting.

Nebraska Reading First Institutes for K-3 Reading Teams

After the two-day leadership sessions for principals, Lead Teachers, and Reading Coaches, they will be joined by K-3 reading teachers, Title I teachers, and Resource teachers K-12, who will complete the reading teams for the three-day institutes. Training materials developed by the Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts will be adapted to align to Nebraska Reading/Writing standards and criterion referenced assessments developed at local districts through the STARS initiative.

Reading Teacher Team Training Institutes	
Resources: <i>Teacher Reading Academies: Professional Development for Preventing Reading Difficulties</i> , training materials developed by the Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts, The University of Texas at Austin College of Education	
Kindergarten Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of the five reading components • English Language Learners • Oral language and vocabulary development • Circle time • Phonological awareness • Using assessment to inform instruction • Learning Centers – practice time • Alphabetic understanding and phonics • Spelling and writing • Read-aloud sessions • Listening comprehension • Book knowledge – concepts of print • Designing effective lessons • Putting it all together

First Grade Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of training and components • English Language Learners • Phonemic awareness • Phonics and word study • Using assessment to inform instruction • Spelling • Fluency • Vocabulary • Comprehension – reading text • Writing • Instruction for struggling readers • Designing effective lessons • Putting it all together
Second and Third Grade Levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of training and reading components • English Language Learners • Phonics and word studies • Using assessment to inform instruction • Reading groups – managing the classroom • Fluency • Spelling • Comprehension levels and text structures • Vocabulary instruction • Reading a variety of fiction and nonfiction • Writing • Designing effective lessons • Intervention for struggling readers • Putting it all together

Due to limited funding and a vast geographical area, trainings will be strategically scheduled to ensure quality training that will impact teachers the most efficiently and effectively. The state has been divided into regional training sites based on the ESU boundaries (see Appendix I). Repeated sessions will be provided at sites that contain the largest populations. Consideration was given to providing at least one institute in the west, central, and eastern regions each year. The first group to go through the institutes, Group I, will be all of the K-3 teachers, resource teachers K-12, and Title I teachers in the buildings receiving sub-grants. Groups II – III will be targeted for statewide training for non-grantee teachers. Grades K-1, then grades 2-3, resource teachers K-12, and Title I teachers working with grades K-3. Groups IV-VI will be targeting K-3 reading teams who were unable to attend the previous sessions due to limit registration, scheduling problems, or new teacher or new assignments to grades K-3. Classroom reading teachers, resource teachers K-12, and Title I teachers working with grades 2-3 will be

encouraged to work as teams to support one another in providing consistent and coordinated reading instruction. After the first year of the program, ESU 18 (Lincoln Public Schools) and ESU 19 (Omaha Public Schools) may begin to provide their own trainings. Over the course of the 3-6 year grant cycle, all teachers of reading will have opportunity for initial and follow-up training. Professors of reading instruction from the various institutes of higher education, along with pre-service teachers, will be invited to attend any of the training at no charge. Please see the following tentative schedule.

Projected Schedule and Locations for Reading First Institutes		
Year	Training Institutes	Location of Training
Year 1 – 2003-04 Statewide Awareness Sessions Web-Based or On-Site for Study Teams K-3 Teachers, Administrator, Title I and Special Education Year 2 – Year 3 2004-05 2005-06	Nebraska Reading First Institutes Grantees Group I K-3, Title I, Special Education, K-12 Follow-up Trainings Analysis of Assessment Data Intervention Strategies/Programs for Specific Needs Report of Results and Final Data Collection	Omaha/Lincoln, Kearney/Grand Island Lexington/North Platte South Sioux City Scottsbluff Columbus/Norfolk/Fremont (Specific locations to be determined after sub-grants are awarded)

Year 2 – 2004-05 Statewide Professional Development for Administrator, Reading Coaches, and Lead Teachers K-3 Teachers, Administrator, Title I and Special Education	Nebraska Reading First Institutes Group II K-1, Title I, Special Education, K-12 Follow-up Trainings Assessments K-1	ESUs 1 & 8 ESUs 2, 7 ESU 3 ESUs 4, 5, 6 ESUs 9, 10, 11 ESUs 13, 14 ESUs 15 & 16 ESU 17 ESU 18 Lincoln Public Schools ESU 19 Omaha Public Schools
Year 3 – 2005-06 Statewide Professional Development for Administrator, Reading Coaches, and Lead Teachers K-3 Teachers, Administrator, Title I and Special Education	Nebraska Reading First Institutes Group III 2-3, Title I, Special Education, K-12 Follow-up Trainings Assessments 2-3	ESUs 1 & 8 ESUs 2, 7 ESU 3 ESUs 4, 5, 6 ESUs 9, 10, 11 ESUs 13, 14 ESUs 15 & 16 ESU 17 ESU 18 Lincoln Public Schools ESU 19 Omaha Public Schools
Year 4 – 2006-07 Statewide Professional Development for Administrator, Reading Coaches, and Lead Teachers K-3 Teachers, Administrator, Title I and Special Education	Nebraska Reading First Institutes Group IV K-3, Title I, Special Education, K-12 Follow-up Trainings Assessments K-3	ESUs 2, 7 ESU 3 ESUs 4, 5, 6 ESUs 9, 10, 11 ESUs 13, 14 ESUs 15 & 16 ESU 17 ESU 18 Lincoln Public Schools ESU 19 Omaha Public Schools
Year 5 – 2007-08 Statewide Professional Development for Administrator, Reading Coaches, and Lead Teachers K-3 Teachers, Administrator, Title I and Special Education	Nebraska Reading First Institutes Group V Grades K-3, Title I, Special Education, K-12 Follow-up Trainings Assessments K-3	ESUs 2, 7 ESU 3 & OPS ESUs 4, 5, 6 & LPS ESUs 9, 10, 11 ESUs 13, 14, 17 ESUs 15,16
Year 6 – 2008-09 Statewide Professional Development for Administrator, Reading Coaches, Lead Teachers K-3 Teachers, Administrator, Title I and Special Education	Nebraska Reading First Institutes Group VI Grades K-3, Title I, Special Education, K-12 Follow-up Trainings Assessments K-3	ESUs 2, 7 ESU 3 & OPS ESUs 4, 5, 6 & LPS ESUs 9, 10, 11 ESUs 13, 14, 17 ESUs 15,16

After the Reading Institutes, all participants will be involved in follow-up sessions at the district level or on a regional basis. Quarterly networking sessions will be held for Lead Teachers, Reading Coaches, and administrators. At least once a year, one quarterly meeting will be two

days in length. Local classroom teachers will be invited to attend to receive additional in-depth training and technical assistance. Please see the schedule identified on the master timeline on pages 87-90. Monthly follow-up sessions will be held for classroom teachers at the building level. The out-lined follow-up sessions will provide opportunities for professionals to network and share ideas about what is working and to seek advice in the areas where they need assistance regarding the appropriate assessments (screening, diagnostic, classroom-based, and instructional assessments) which can be utilized to document students' abilities and progress. Through careful screening, teachers will be able to determine those students who need further diagnosis or intensive and alternative intervention. The Cadre will require the use of DIBELS for grantee schools but will share other scientifically-based assessments and the process for selecting reliable and validated K-3 assessments so that non-grantee districts have the ability to select multiple measures to screen, diagnose, and monitor reading progress. Each Reading First School will be asked to identify the diagnostic measures it plans to use in order to provide specific information on targeted students for specific early intervention. The Reading Coaches and Lead Teachers will be trained to use and provide technical assistance for DIBELS, GORT-4, Gates/ MacGintie, and the Peabody. In addition to administering assessments, Reading Coaches and Lead Teachers will guide classroom teachers through the process of administering the assessments and also provide a process of analyzing the data to make instructional decisions regarding further intervention needs. Non-grantee schools will continue to use locally developed criterion referenced-based assessments as an outcome-based measurement to report to local constituents and school improvement reports.

Special education and classroom teachers will collaborate to administer specific diagnostic assessments. As a collaborative team, teachers will be trained to administer and interpret assessments to make decisions for individual education plans according to requirements established in the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Districts participating in statewide professional development will be encouraged to use the Analysis of Reading Assessment Measures Coding Form (Kame'enui et al, February 2002) in selecting other quality instruments for purposes of screening, diagnostic, progress monitoring, or outcome measures that are not listed in the suggested assessments (see Appendix J).

During the institutes and follow-up sessions, non-grantee districts will also receive assistance in the selection of reading programs and materials as evaluated by the Materials Selection Committee. Nebraska's Reading First grantee schools and non-grantee schools will be

encouraged to use the criteria established through A Consumer's Guide to Evaluating a Core Reading Program Grades K-3: A Critical Elements Analysis (Simmons and Kame'enui) to validate existing programs and materials and identify potential new ones (see Appendix K). Non-grantee districts choosing to use their own process of validation will be expected to ensure that any programs or materials selected meet the following requirements:

- Are efficacy-based on carefully designed experimental studies, program-based on research-validated methods
- Have been field-tested with a large sampling
- Are aligned to curriculum outcomes and state standards
- Provide explicit and systematic in K-3 grade levels in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and/or comprehension of text
- Contain a scope and sequence that ensures repetition and practice for explicit learning
- Move from basic reading skills to higher order reading skills
- Support content area reading (mathematics, science, social studies, visual and performing arts)
- Support differentiated instruction for flexible grouping and instruction at the correct level of difficulty
- Include instructional strategies for supporting struggling readers or enrichment needs
- Contain or are aligned with assessments to monitor progress of reading outcomes

Nebraska Reading First has identified a potential list of programs and materials that grantee or non-grantee schools will use for interventions and support for further practices beyond the core comprehensive reading program. On receiving funds for Nebraska Reading First, the Materials Review Committee will analyze the listed materials and others to make final decisions on programs that best support teachers in providing interventions for students needing further assistance in one or more of the reading components.

Intervention Materials and Support Resources
<p>Phonemic Awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Stepping Stones: Serial Processing, Phonemic Awareness, and Rapid Letter Naming</i> (Dr. Ron Nelson, University of Nebraska – Lincoln, The Center for At-Risk Children, Barkley Center) • <i>Phonemic Awareness in Young Children</i>, Adams et al., Brookes Publishing • <i>Road to the Code: A Phonological Awareness Program for Young Children</i>, Blackman et al., Brookes Publishing • <i>Speech to Print</i>, Moats, Brookes Publishing

Phonetic Principles – Direct Instruction

- *Sound Partners*, Vadasy, Washington Institute of Research
- *LETRS*, Moats, Sopris West, 2002
- *Writing and Spelling Road to Reading and Thinking*, Orton Phonograms, McCulloch, Riggs Institute
- *A Guide to Teaching Phonics*, Orton, Educators Publishing Service
- *Direct Instruction*, Engelmann and Osborne, McGraw Hill/SRA
- *Saxon Phonics: An Incremental Development*, Saxon Publishing, Inc. 1998
- *Teaching Letter Names and Sounds*, Ethna Reid, Exemplary Center for Reading Instruction (ECRI)
- *Teaching New Words Through Phonics*, Ethna Reid, Exemplary Center for Reading Instruction (ECRI)
- *Teaching New Words Through the Word Structure Methods*, Ethna Reid, Exemplary Center for Reading Instruction (ECRI)

Reading Fluency

- *QuickReads*, Hiebert, Pearson Learning Group
- *Read Naturally*, 2001, St. Paul, MN

Vocabulary Development

- *Bringing Words to Life*, Beck, McKeown, and Kucan, Guilford Publishers
- *Vocabulary Development*, Stahl, Brookline Books
- *Word Power: What Every Educator Needs to Know About Teaching Vocabulary*, Stahl and Kapinus, NEA Professional Library
- *Teaching New Words Through the Sight and Context Methods*, Ethna Reid, Exemplary Center for Reading Instruction (ECRI)

Comprehension Instructional Strategies

- *Corrective Reading*, Engelmann and Osborne, McGraw Hill/SRA
- *Comprehension Instruction: Research-Based Best Practices*, Block and Pressley, Guilford Press
- *Teaching Literal and Inferential Comprehension*, Ethna Reid, Exemplary Center for Reading Instruction (ECRI)
- *Teaching Critical Comprehension*, Ethna Reid, Exemplary Center for Reading Instruction (ECRI)
- *Teaching Creative Comprehension*, Ethna Reid, Exemplary Center for Reading Instruction (ECRI)
- *Teaching Literature*, Ethna Reid, Exemplary Center for Reading Instruction (ECRI)

Professional development will be the most an important variable to support and increase classroom teachers' skill level and confidence for the implementation of effective reading programs for grades K-3.

For the Nebraska State Board of Education and the Nebraska Department of Education, improved reading achievement continues to be a top priority. At the state level, Nebraska is making every effort to collaborate and coordinate with other federal programs involving pre-reading and reading, including No Child Left Behind, Title I, Even Start, and other early childhood programs. The Reading First professional development system, along with these

other federal programs, will build a strong foundation necessary to ensure that all children in Nebraska are reading on grade level by the end of third grade. Once the structure is a part of on-going school improvement, the model will sustain and can be replicated at grades 4-12 to ensure that all students are independent, proficient readers.

1. g. Integration of Proposed Reading First Activities with Reading Excellence Activities

Nebraska does not have a Reading Excellence Grant however; every effort will be made to integrate the Reading First Initiative with the other initiatives mentioned in Section 1.a. of this application

2. STATE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

2. a. State Technical Assistance Plan

Statewide continuity and communication will be enhanced with technical assistance, which will be provided throughout the project in various formats through different venues: on-site person-to-person resources, technology resources, and printed resources.

Technical Assistance Through Person-to-Person Contact

The Cadre will immediately begin to provide person-to-person technical assistance through pre-writing workshops to prospective applicants. These workshops will be made available in four regional locations to insure that all identified schools are receiving explicit directives and assistance in developing a plan that is aligned to the grant criteria of scientifically-based research in reading programs. Educational Service Units will also become involved by encouraging smaller districts to consort their monies to carry out the requirements outlined for grantees.

As the grant progresses through the each of the three year cycles, the summer institutes, regional follow-up sessions and on-site visits will provide an avenue to support and assist local educators, and add or modify specific training for reading instruction.

Other outreach sessions will be conducted at already existing state and regional conferences. The Nebraska Department of Education, the State School Boards Association, and the Educational Service Units Professional Development Organization are all networked and share

in partnerships to promote and support statewide initiatives for improving reading for all K-3 students. This infrastructure will become an essential vehicle for information to be disseminated in an effective and efficient manner.

Person-to-Person technical assistance possibilities:

- Pre-writing workshops for potential grantees
- Teacher training institutes for grantees and other LEAs
- Quarterly networking meetings for grantees and other interested LEAs to assist, monitor progress, network, and share best practices (two per year will be held at a centralized location, and two will be held via technology)
- On-site visits to grantees, at least once per year, to provide support and monitor progress (administrators, lead teachers, reading coaches, other classroom teachers as needed)
- Coaching visits to grantees
- Telephone contacts
- Technical assistance on improving reading instruction will be provided for both Reading First grantees as well as other LEAs at already existing state conferences:
 - Nebraska Schools Administrators' Days
 - State School Boards Association
 - Nebraska Rural Schools Association
 - Regional Principal's meetings
 - State Staff Development Conference
 - Early Childhood Annual Conference
 - Title I Program Improvement Conference

Technical Assistance Through Technology

Technology structures have been established in the state of Nebraska since 1993. Urban and rural districts are equipped with Internet access to web-based communication and distance learning technology connected to regional sites. The Nebraska Department of Education has the capability to connect with each district with one-way, call-in technology as well as two-way video/two-way audio to over 20 regional sites. The state has plans to continue adding more sites on a yearly basis so that in five years, the ability to communicate statewide will come to fruition. Some training and technical assistance will be provided through technology as a means for follow-up and networking sessions. These accommodations will serve the on-going needs for regional and district level personnel. Multiple opportunities for communication help eliminate the ever-present barriers of money restraints, efficiency of participants' travel time, but most important, teacher-to-student academic learning time.

Nebraska has consistently looked ahead and set the pace for the rest of the nation in terms of technology in schools. It was the first state to dedicate satellite access exclusively for the

delivery of education to all K-12 students and their teachers and is one of the few states in which all high schools have access to distance education classrooms with intrastate fiber connections. With an extensive distance learning network and associated high-tech classrooms, Nebraska has worked to provide a vehicle for K-12 and continuing adult education across its vast landscape.

In 1984, Nebraska's Legislature established the Education Technology Center in the Nebraska Department of Education and thus launched the statewide K-12 School Internet System. Today, every school building and classroom across the state has a direct connection to the Internet. In fact, Nebraska was one of the first states to establish an infrastructure of Internet web sites statewide to provide servers, toll-free access, and staff training in the use of its new system. This infrastructure has led to significant changes in the classroom as well. According to the article, "E-Defining Education Technology," published in the May 2002 issue of Education Week (Bushweller), Nebraska ranked first nationally in 2002 in percent of schools statewide where at least half of their teachers were using the Internet for instruction. While the national average was 33%, 80% of Nebraska's school utilized the Internet in classroom instruction.

These technologies will provide a framework for Reading First follow-up training sessions, networking, and on-going technical assistance. In order to reach large numbers of schools at one time and to save on travel costs, statewide satellite downlink sites will provide regional training as well as ongoing technical assistance, when feasible.

Through web cam technology, the website will house demonstration/tutorial clips in areas such as effective classroom practices, instructional strategies to improve reading achievement and useful ideas for administrators and lead teachers for coaching and monitoring.

For the purposes of this initiative, the Nebraska Department of Education will create a special page on the NDE web site (www.nde.state.ne.us) to post Reading First information including:

- Sub-grant information including application forms and requirements, deadlines, notification of pre-writing workshops and frequently asked questions
- Promotion of academies and other professional development opportunities
- Helpful hints on scientifically-based reading research and sharing of best practices.
- Linkages to National Experts for updates on research based practices and professional development opportunities
- Links to other related reading websites, professional reading organizations, regional and national reading conferences, etc.

- On-line training
- Data collection and other reporting requirement.

Technical Assistance Through Print

Educational decision-making is a local responsibility in Nebraska as districts develop curriculum, assessments, and instruction, which are aligned to state standards. Printed materials will be a valuable resource for local educators because they will provide consistent information at any time of the day or night when local program planning and lesson development takes place.

In the spring of 2002, every elementary school building in Nebraska received three documents that established a consistent knowledge of scientifically-based research at the local level:

Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read – Summary Document (National Reading Panel), Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read, (Armbruster, Leyhr, and Osborn), and Put Reading First: Helping Your Child Learn to Read (RMC Research).

Reading Institute training manuals focusing on programs and practices meeting the criteria of scientific research will be developed and disseminated to K-3 teachers, K-12 resource teachers, Title I teachers, administrators, lead teachers/coaches as they are involved in the Reading First Institutes.

Additional supplemental information and material resources will be provided during the follow-up sessions for coaches, lead teachers, and administrators to sustain research based practices and meet the varied needs of students in reading classrooms. Preliminary work has already begun on technical assistance documents for local school districts based on resources from the University of Oregon on the following:

- Guides to assist districts in determining screening, diagnostic, and classroom assessment instruments.
- Guide to assist districts in selecting supplemental programs and professional resources.

Technical assistance activities are listed on the master timeline on pages 71-73.

Targeted Technical Assistance for Grantee Schools

Reading First project staff will continually monitor the progress of grantee schools for the purposes of targeting technical assistance and professional development. Quarterly follow-up meetings and on-site visits will be utilized to make sure the LEA grantees are implementing

approved programs with fidelity, integrity, quality, and adherence to scientifically-based reading research. Cadre members will visit each grantee district twice within the first year of the program and then conduct at least one on-site visit annually for the remainder of the grant period. During the on-site visit, time will be built in for classroom observation and face-to-face meetings with local classroom teachers, Lead Teachers, Reading Coaches and local administrators. They will use common criteria for monitoring buildings and classrooms (Appendix Q). Reading Coaches will meet regularly with LEAs and will inform the Cadre if additional on-site technical assistance is necessary. Schools failing to make progress will receive intensive technical assistance. If after two years in the program with failure to make progress and intensive technical assistance, schools will be removed from the program.

2. b. Building Statewide Infrastructure

At every level—from State Board Policies and Academic Standards to locally developed School Improvement Plans—Nebraska has demonstrated its commitment to improving reading instruction. On this foundation, Nebraska Reading First will build a strong, system-wide infrastructure of support from the Governor’s office to the local classroom level.

In May 2002, Nebraska Governor Mike Johanns and Commissioner of Education Dr. Douglas Christensen appointed a Reading Leadership Team. The team has met twice to date (see Appendix M). The team will meet every 6 months to 12 months during the 6-year implementation period of the Reading First program in order to provide broad-based input and support. Between meetings, the team will communicate via e-mail. The Reading Leadership Team's mission and purpose is to:

- Monitor and examine the scientific base for instruction in schools that need to improve reading achievement
- Ensure a seamless complementary approach to reading achievement throughout the state
- Assist in oversight and evaluation of Reading First program activities in the state
- Review the processes for implementation of the Reading First sub-grants to schools; advise as to the efficacy of the process, sufficiency of timelines, and provision for technical assistance

Members were appointed to serve based on the following criteria:

- demonstrated a firm commitment to children and their communities
- demonstrated active involvement in projects related to reading, writing, literacy, either at a local or statewide level
- represented one or more of the constituencies described in the Reading First Guidance.

Nebraska Reading Leadership Team

Lauren Hill — Governor's Policy Research Office (representing Governor Mike Johanns)
Doug Christensen Commissioner — Nebraska Department of Education
Tammy Barry — Legal Counsel, Senator Ron Raikes' Office (representing Senator Ron Raikes, Chair of the Education Committee)
Mel Clancy — Director of Elementary Education, Omaha Public Schools
Vida Stabler — Foreign Language, UmoⁿHoⁿ Nation Public Schools
Deila Steiner — Federal Programs Director, Lincoln Public Schools
Susan Obermiller — Program Director, Central Nebraska Community Services
Ann Bird — Special Populations Director, Nebraska Department of Education
Kim Larson — Reading/Writing Director, Nebraska Department of Education
Mary Ann Losh — Professional Development Administrator, Nebraska Department of Education
Marilyn Peterson — Title I Administrator, Nebraska Department of Education
Nancy Rowch — Equal Education Opportunity Director, Nebraska Department of Education
Eleanor Shirley-Kirkland — Head Start Collaboration Director, Nebraska Department of Education
Josie Filipi — Crete, Nebraska
Jean Howard — Curriculum Specialist, Willa Cather Elementary School
Bev Paul — First Grade Teacher, Gordon Elementary School
Janel Wilbern — Special Education Teacher, Westside High School
Deb Ross, Director — Child & Family Development Corporation of Adams County
Kathy Danielson — Professor, University of Nebraska-Omaha
Carolyn Linster — Professor, Wayne State College
Kathy Wilson — Professor, University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Sandra Ostrand — Principal & Title I Director, Walthill Elementary School
Lynette Block — Staff Development Coordinator, Educational Service Unit 6
Jody Riibe — Program Supervisor, Educational Service Unit 2
Norman Ronell — Administrator, Educational Service Unit 7
Candis Jones — Coordinator, Alliance Even Start Program
Rosemary Cervantes — Educational Service Unit 10, Program Coordinator
Wid Dockhorn — Dyslexic Association
Theresa Wachal — Platte Valley Literacy Council
Ann Mactier — State Board of Education
Nancy Edick — Metropolitan Omaha Education Consortium

A complete listing of the organizations and constituencies represented by the various Reading Leadership Team members is included in the Appendices (see Appendix N).

In order to provide a deeper understanding of current reading research and to cultivate a shared background on the tenets driving Reading First initiative, the Nebraska Department of Education provided the Reading Leadership Team with many printed resources (see below). The NDE Reading Director has, and will, serve as the designated resource person for the Reading Leadership Team and will coordinate all communication and future meetings for the group. Please see the master schedule on pages 71-73 for a complete listing of proposed future activities.

Written Materials Provided to Leadership Team

- Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read – Reports of the Subgroups, 2000
- Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read – Summary Document, 2000
- Put Reading First: Helping Your Child Learn to Read, 2001
- Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read, 2001
- *Nebraska Department of Education Reading/Writing Policy Statement*, October 1997
- *Nebraska Department of Education Staff Development Policy Statement*, June 1998
- *Nebraska Department of Education Guidelines for Reading Instruction*, 2001
- *USDE Reading First Legislation and Guidance*, 2002
- Every Child Reading: A Professional Development Guide, 2000
- Every Child Reading: An Action Plan of the Learning First Alliance, 1998

2. c. State Management Plan

With a limited allowable administrative allocation and a vast geographic area to address, Nebraska's program will use a team approach to coordinate the day-to-day activities of Reading First. The coordinated team approach will maximize on-site technical assistance and expertise while reducing the time and dollar costs associated with traveling to remote sites.

Representatives from the Nebraska Department of Education, Educational Service Units, Institutions of Higher Education and Local School Districts will comprise the Statewide Reading Coordinating and Training Cadre. A full-time coordinator with an extensive reading education background will be named to direct all Cadre activities. Additional expertise will be contracted for the various facets of the program on a per-day basis.

Members of the Statewide Reading Coordinating and Training Cadre

Project Coordinator (full-time): This position will be responsible for coordinating all activities of the Cadre as well as the professional development and technical assistance for local school districts. The Coordinator will serve as the chief trainer for the Reading Institutes and the primary contact for the Expert Panel.

Lynette Block, currently a professional development consultant with Educational Service Unit #6, will serve as the interim Project Coordinator from the time funding is received until a permanent full time project coordinator is named. She has an extensive background in scientifically-based reading research and is well respected across Nebraska for her expertise. She served on the development team for the Nebraska Reading/Writing Standards and co-authored the Nebraska Framework for Reading/Writing. She has developed and delivered training in all areas of reading, instructional strategies, and classroom management. She has provided professional development to all levels of classroom teachers as well as school administrators. She has followed scientifically-based reading research at the national level for several years and has worked personally with several of the members of the Expert Panel. In the event that a different person may be named to fill the permanent director's position, Nebraska ensures the Project Coordinator will be highly quantified in scientifically-based reading research.

Regional Trainers (five trainers @ 40 days/each): These positions will be responsible for providing services on a regional basis. As members of the Cadre, they will serve as major trainers for the institutes and coordinate regional follow-up and networking sessions. Because they will be located throughout Nebraska, they will be able to provide on-site technical assistance to LEAs on regular a basis. They will be housed at Educational Service Units, which will provide them access to technology, communications equipment and printing and mailing services.

The regional trainers have not been named at this time but will need to demonstrate through their vitas that they have an extensive background in reading and are well versed in scientifically-based reading research.

NDE Reading/Writing Director: The Nebraska Department of Education's Director of Reading/Writing will be required to spend at least one-quarter of his/her time promoting the success of the Reading First Program. This person will serve on the Cadre and participate in all of the trainings and follow-up sessions. This will ensure that there is total alignment between reading instruction in grades K-3 and other programs promoted 4-12 throughout Nebraska schools. This person will also be responsible for coordinating the Reading Leadership Team meetings.

Kim Larson has been Nebraska's Reading/Writing Coordinator for three years. She facilitated the clarification of Nebraska's Reading/Writing Standards. She is a former K-3 teacher and has extensive background in the teaching of reading. She has participated in all of the USDE trainings on Reading First. She has served on the planning committee for this grant and coordinated the first two Reading Leadership Team meetings.

Grants Administrator (50 days): This position will administer all facets of the sub-grant process including coordinating the pre-grant writing workshops, and facilitating the reviewing and awarding of the sub-grants. Once the grants are awarded this position will monitor all financial and reporting activities of the various sub-grants including the progress reports and evaluation requirements.

David Ankenman has extensive background in grant administration. He has coordinated many federal sub-grant processes including Goals 2000 and Comprehensive School Reform. He has attended all of the USDE Reading First workshops, and is well versed in the grant requirements. He is currently a member of the No Child Left Behind Management Committee and is well versed on the requirements for NCLB as well as Reading First.

Reading First Coordinators (from no less than four sub-grantees): These positions, to be added after awards are announced, will serve as conduits from the local level to the Cadre and will be able to provide valuable information to the Cadre on the needs of local school districts. They may serve as trainers for the institutes.

Representatives from Institutions of Higher Education: Up to two of the representatives currently serving on the Reading Leadership Team will be asked to join the Cadre to ensure collaboration as well as to promote coordination and consistency of programs between pre-service and in-service trainings.

Dr. Kathy Wilson, professor of reading at the University of Nebraska, has agreed to serve on the Cadre. She will also be coordinating networking and information sharing sessions at statewide collaborative meetings among reading professors.

All vitae can be found in Appendix O.

The Cadre will meet with the following representatives from NDE on a regular basis to make sure that Nebraska's Reading First Program adheres to the ideals set forth in No Child Left Behind, the Nebraska STARS Assessment System, the Nebraska School Improvement Process, and the Nebraska Accreditation System:

Donlynn Rice – NDE Administrator of Curriculum and Instruction
Marilyn Peterson – NDE Federal Programs Director, NCLB and Title I Director
Pat Roschewski – NDE Statewide Director of Assessment
Sharon Meyer – NDE Administrator of Accreditation and School Improvement

In addition, the Cadre will contract with a nationally renowned Expert Panel. At this time, Nebraska's Reading First Program has a commitment from four outstanding reading researchers with an exceptional degree of expertise and authority in the specific areas of alphabetics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension of text. Selection was based on their contributions to research-based practices in reading, their current published works, and applications to the reading classroom. Their expertise will be used to consult, advise, plan, or train for a total of six days per consultant per year. Contracts will be confirmed after official notification of the grant award from USDE.

The Expert Panel will provide initial technical assistance and training for the sub-grant application process to establish consistency and to assure that potential grantees incorporate scientifically-based instructional strategies, programs, materials, and assessments for improving reading achievement into their programs. The Expert Panel will also provide consultation and guidance for the Cadre as they develop, modify and adjust the training materials aligned to the Nebraska Reading/Writing Standards. Their assistance in evaluating materials and assessments will provide sound direction to statewide implementation of scientifically-based reading training for teachers and administrators. The following is a list of the consultants and their areas of expertise:

Dr. Louisa Moats - Alphabetics (Phonemic Awareness and Phonetic Principles)

Louisa Cook Moats, Ed.D., is currently Project Director, District of Columbia Public Schools site of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Early Interventions Project, National Institutes of Health. Dr. Moats' primary responsibility in Washington is to design and implement professional development for teachers under a special appropriation from the US, Congress. Dr. Moats received her doctorate of education in reading and human development from Harvard University's Graduate School of Education. She worked as a teacher,

neuropsychological technician, and specialist in learning disorders prior to her doctoral training. She was a licensed psychologist in private practice for 15 years in Vermont and a graduate instructor both at Harvard and at St. Michael's College in Vermont. She developed innovative courses for teachers linking the disciplines of disorders, spelling, and written language. She has written and lectured widely throughout the United States and abroad. Her publications include journal articles, book chapters, a classroom basal spelling program, and books including Spelling: Development, Disability, and Instruction, Straight Talk About Reading: How Parents Can Make a Difference in the Early Years, and Speech to Print.

Dr. Elfrieda Hiebert - Fluency

Elfrieda (Freddy) H. Hiebert, Ph.D., is a professor in the Literacy, Language, and Culture program in the School of Education at the University of Michigan. Dr. Hiebert began her educational career as an elementary teacher in Clovis, California. She has been a recipient of a Spencer Fellowship, awarded through the National Academy of Education, and she has also been on the faculty at the University of Kentucky and at the University of Colorado, Boulder. Dr. Hiebert received her Ph.D. from the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. For the 2000-2001 academic year, she held a position as a Visiting Professor at the University of California-Santa Cruz. Dr. Hiebert is the author of the recently published Quick Reads Program (a program promoting fluent reading) and one of the authors of the Ready Readers Program. She has published more than 100 research articles and chapters on how instructional and assessment practices influence literacy acquisition.

Dr. Steven Stahl - Vocabulary

Steven A. Stahl is Professor of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, previously at the University of Georgia where he directed the Reading Clinic. He is also Co-Director of the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA). Steve received his doctorate in reading education from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. He has worked as a public school teacher in Maine and New York. He has published more than 100 books, monographs, articles and book chapters. Steven has had a long-standing interest in vocabulary instruction and its relationship to reading comprehension. He has collaborated with other researchers and educators as he shares his expertise and practical applications of vocabulary instruction with teachers.

Dr. Michael Pressley - Comprehension of Text

Michael Pressley, Ph.D., Michigan State University, previously at Notre Dame, is an expert in comprehension processing and in primary-level reading education, which is related to his career-long research on children's learning. He has published approximately 250 articles, chapters, and books. His recent research involves exploration of how literacy can be motivated in classrooms. Dr. Pressley received his Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota. He recently completed his term as editor of the *Journal of Educational Psychology*.

Materials and Review Committee:

On receiving approval for Nebraska Reading First funding, one of the first tasks for the Statewide Reading Coordinating and Training Cadre will be to form a special ad-hoc Materials Review Committee to review and evaluate reading programs and materials that grantee schools will then use to make a selection for a district's core reading program. Outstanding K-3 reading teachers representing local districts, regional reading coaches, statewide reading specialists, and the national reading expert panel will collaborate with the Coordinating and Training Cadre in an extensive review of materials.

On-Going Cadre Duties:

The Cadre will collectively coordinate all facets of Nebraska's Reading First Program. Many of them have met during the past several months in preparation for the program. They have attended the national and regional training sessions sponsored by the USDE and have collaborated on the writing of this grant application. They have spent considerable time researching programs and outlining a plan that will adhere to the guidelines of Reading First. They have begun preliminary work on many of the resources that will be available to local school districts that will impact reading instruction throughout the state on Nebraska. Upon notification of funding they will begin to meet weekly until the first Reading First Institute is held and then no less than monthly to facilitate all aspects of the program including:

National Expertise and Resources:

- Identification of a national Expert Panel for consultation and review of materials and assessments (committee will meet for a total of six days with up to four national experts as schedules permit)
- Review and adapt Texas training materials for academies to tailor to the Nebraska Reading/Writing Standards

Sub-grants:

- Disseminate application information on Reading First to Nebraska schools

- Design and conduct pre-writing workshops
- Provide technical assistance to potential grantees
- Identify grant reviewers and readers that have a knowledge of scientifically-based reading research
- Facilitate review of applications and notification of awards

Professional Development:

- Identify National experts for consultation and training
- Prepare master timeline of activities for statewide professional development
- Identify up to 60 reading coaches from ESUs and LEAs
- Identify lead teachers for regional training academies and on-going support at the local level
- Conduct specialized training for reading coaches, administrators and local lead teachers
- Design and coordinate regional Reading Institute
 - Determine sites – reserve facilities
 - Design and provide Awareness Sessions on the five components of SBR
 - Set up registration process and data base
 - Print registration promotional materials
 - Send out registration forms (hard copies and electronic)
 - Conduct six regional Reading First Institutes annually from 2003-2009
 - Develop and monitor timeline for support and follow-up for administrators, reading coaches and lead teachers
 - Assist local school districts with developing timelines for follow-up with classroom teachers
 - Evaluate effectiveness of trainings to ensure quality implementation of Reading First

Development/Collection of Materials

- Scientifically-Based Research Reading Programs
 - Identify process for selecting and evaluating materials and programs based criteria described in A Consumer's Guide to Evaluating a Core Reading Program Grades K-3: A Critical Elements Analysis (Simmons, and Kame'enui) developed by the University of Oregon.
 - Assure that materials and programs are aligned to local and state standards
 - Assist LEAs with review and selection from list of options.
 - Assist LEAs in selecting materials matched to student levels, direct explicit instructional strategies, and researched validated programs
 - Assist LEAs in selecting supplemental, and/or intervention reading materials
 - Assessments: Screening, Diagnostic, Program Monitoring, Outcome Measures, and Nebraska Standards Based
 - Identify process for evaluating and selecting assessments for specific purposes based on criteria set by the University of Oregon.
 - Assist LEAs in creating assessment schedule and/or timeline
 - Assist LEAs in developing a process for analyzing assessment data to make decisions for instruction and intervention

Technical Assistance and Project Monitoring

- Conduct on-site visits
- Coordinate and facilitate quarterly networking sessions
- Coordinate distance learning and satellite broadcasts

- Provide timeline for statewide technical assistance
- Respond on a regular basis to phone calls, e-mails, and other requests for information

Data Student Progress Collection/Evaluation: Assessing, Collecting and Reporting

- Design a process to collect, manage, analyze, report K-3 data that validates the Local School Improvement Plan and State Reporting System
- Create a statewide management system with statewide access
- Select and prioritize assessment data to be collected from participating districts
- Collect and analyze data gathered from academy participants
- Design a teacher self assessment related to classroom reading/writing instruction and assessment practices
- Collect, analyze, and report student assessment results from individual school districts into a statewide data system
- Monitor progress reports submitted by grantees

Project Reporting

- Meet and Report periodically to the Reading/First Leadership Team
- Compile data for progress reports
- Prepare annual reports for federal grant requirements
- Prepare 3-year progress reports for federal grant

Following is a tentative master timeline that has been developed by the grant writing committee. The dates may change based on final notification of the grant award.

Reading First Timeline for Implementation

Timeline will be amended according to final approval date of application.

April/May 2003

- Final draft of RF application sent to team members for review and response
- Establish Statewide Coordinating and Training Cadre
- Contract with National Experts
- Website development for Awareness Sessions-*Components of Reading Instruction that Works* for district study teams
- Go Live with Reading First Website
- Reading First Leadership Team meeting

June/July 2003

- Review response from USDE and provide guidance to grant writing/Reading First planning team
- Notify eligible districts
- Place RFP for LEA sub-grants on Reading First Website
- Review process and criteria for selecting grant readers

August 2003

- Reading First update and information at Annual Administrator Conference
- National experts provide consultation and training for the Cadre
- Design and conduct pre-grant writing workshops
- Identify readers for the Nebraska Reading First Grant
- Provide technical assistance for grantees

September 2003

- Design Pre-Institute Awareness Sessions and Reading First Institute (for local districts)
- The Cadre reviews and adapts training materials to align with Nebraska standards and assessment system
- The Cadre meets with regional Educational Service Units to share process
- Reading First Leadership Team meeting – Review plans for Reading Institutes, receive update on application process
- Establish a Ad-hock Reading First Materials Review Committee

October 2003

- RFP Deadline for Submission
- Preliminary Staff Review of RFP (check for completeness)
- Reading First Expert Review Team Reviews LEA Applications
- Notify Districts of Status of Application Submitted

November 2003

- Award LEA sub-grants for Nebraska Reading First
- Assist LEAs in Pre-Institute Awareness Sessions
- Identify Reading Coaches
- Statewide Coordinating and Training Cadre presents Reading First updates and information to State School Boards Conference
- Convening of Materials Review Committee to evaluate reading programs

January 2004

- Train reading coaches (60)
- Schedule Summer 2004 Reading First Institute trainings
- Notify non-grantee schools of opportunities for Reading Institutes

February/April 2004

- Conduct Reading First Institute for grantee schools and set up assessment data collection process for participating districts to be used for progress monitoring (Group I)
- Pre-Institute Awareness Sessions for non-grantee schools (Group II)
- Reading First Leadership Team meeting – Review grantee implementation plans for year two
- Begin on-site monitoring

June 2004

- The Cadre meet with national experts
- Review baseline data submitted regarding achievement of children in eligible LEAs
- Submit annual progress report to USDE

July/August 2004

- Two day follow-up networking and training session for coaches, principals, lead teachers, and ESU representatives for (Group I)
- Conduct Reading First Institute and set up assessment data collection process for participating districts to be used for progress monitoring (Group II)

August 2004

- Review Grantee Reading First implementation plans for 2004-05
- Reading First Leadership Team meeting – Review progress reports on year one from grantees

September 2004 -April 2005

- Reading First Grantee programs hold monthly reading team meetings, follow-up training sessions, technical assistance from coaches, lead teacher support and technical assistance, reading assessment, collection of assessment data, data management, data analysis (Group I)
- Continue on-site monitoring

October 2004

- Hold quarterly networking and technical assistance sessions for grantees and non-grantee administrators, reading coaches and lead teachers

Nov/Dec 2004

- Two day follow-up networking and training session for coaches, principals, lead teachers, and ESU representatives for (Group II)

January 2005

- Hold quarterly networking and technical assistance sessions for grantees and non-grantee administrators, reading coaches and lead teachers

February 2005

- Pre-Institute Awareness Sessions for non-grantee schools (Group III)
- Reading First Leadership Team meeting – Monitor progress of grantees

April 2005

- Hold quarterly networking and technical assistance sessions for grantees and non-grantee administrators, reading coaches and lead teachers

May 2005

- The Cadre meets with national experts

June 2005

- Review of data submitted regarding progress of children grantee LEAs and statewide random sample during 2004-05 (Group II)
- Submit annual progress report to USDE

June/July 2005

- Two day follow-up networking and training session for coaches, principals, lead teachers, and ESU representatives (Group I)

July 2005

- Hold quarterly networking and technical assistance sessions for grantees and non-grantee administrators, reading coaches and lead teachers

August 2005

- Review Grantee Reading First implementation plans for 2005-06
- Reading First Leadership Team meeting – Monitor progress of grantees

September 2005 - April 2006

- Local lead teachers and administrators hold monthly reading team meetings, follow-up training sessions, technical assistance from coaches, lead teacher support and technical assistance, reading assessment, collection of assessment data, data management, data analysis
- Continue on-site monitoring of grantees

June 2006

- Submit 3-year progress report to USDE

Repeat schedule for the second round of grantees from 2006-2009, with new training groups added as outlined on pages 68-69.

June 2009

- Submit final report to USDE

Nebraska Reading First Grant Proposed Budget Year 1

Subgrants

\$2,419,200

Administrative Dollars

NDE Reading Director	15,000
Professional Assistant	10,000
Evaluation	45,480

*Additional \$\$ for evaluation will be provided by 2nd yr. funding

Subtotal: **\$70,480**

Technical Assistance and Professional Development Dollars

Consultant Fees

Coordinator	Full-Time	80,000
5 Regional Trainers	40 days @ \$500/day = 300 days	100,000
4 National Experts	6 days @ \$3000/day = 24 days	72,000
Grant Administrator/Coordinator	50 days @ \$300/day	15,000

Subtotal: **\$267,000**

Travel and Training Expenses

Coordinator	<u>In-state</u>	
	50 days @ \$100/day	5,000
	.36/mile @ 10,000 miles	3,600
	<u>Out of state</u>	
	Airfare per 4 trips @ \$1,000	4,000
	Per diem X 8 days @ \$200	1,600

5 Regional Trainers	<u>In-state</u>	
	40 days @ \$100/day X 5=200 days	20,000
	.36/mile @ 5,000 miles X 5 = 25,000 miles	9,000
	<u>Out of state</u>	
	Airfare per 2 trips @ \$1,000 X 5 = 10 trips	10,000
	Per diem X 4 days @ \$200 X 5 = \$4000	4,000
Materials & Development for Trainers		9,620
	Subtotal:	\$66,820

Reading Institutes

1200 Teachers		
Materials	\$50/manual	60,000
Incidental Costs	\$10/day X 3 days	36,000
Rent/Equipment	45 days X \$100	4,500
	Subtotal:	\$100,500

Principals	In kind	
Reading Coaches	60 Coaches @\$250/day X 2 days	30,000
	Training Materials	26,000
LEA Lead Teachers	200 Lead Teachers @100/day X2 days	40,000
	For Substitute Pay/Stipend	
	Subtotal:	\$96,000

Networking Sessions

Attendance by Coaches, Lead Teachers, Administrators		In Kind
Web Site/Maintenance	NDE	\$5,000 – In Kind
Distance Learning Technologies or Facilities for Follow-up/Networking Across the State		
15 sites X 2 hrs. @ \$100/hr. X 6 sessions/yr		\$18,000 – In Kind

TOTAL: \$3,020,000

Follow-Up Trainings

Costs will be covered out of next year's budget

Budget Justification

Administrative Dollars

Reading Director: The Nebraska Director of Reading/Writing will refocus her attention to spend at least one-quarter of her time to promote the success of the Reading First Program. She will serve on the Statewide Reading Training and Coordinating Cadre and participate in all of the trainings and follow-up sessions. This will ensure that there is total alignment between reading instruction in grades K-3 and 4-12 throughout Nebraska schools.

Professional Assistant: This dollar amount represents a one-third-time person to carry out all professional assistant duties for Reading First including but not limited to correspondence, mailings, registrations, and facility arrangements.

Evaluation: The amount reflects some of the cost of the evaluation dollars required to adequately monitor progress and evaluate the success of Reading First. Additional dollars will come from second year funding.

Technical Assistance Dollars

Statewide Reading Training and Coordinating Cadre: A Project Coordinator will be hired full-time in addition to five regional trainers who will provide an additional 200 days/year of service to the Reading First program through contracting on a per-day basis. (Rates listed are based on an average rate of pay.) The Cadre will be comprised of state experts who are well known throughout Nebraska for their reading expertise. They already have a good working relationship with the LEAs and the Nebraska Department for Education. They will provide the majority of the training and technical assistance to the regional reading coaches, ESU Representatives, and local Lead teachers.

Grant Administrator: This person will administer all facets of the sub-grant process including the pre-grant writing workshops, and facilitating the reviewing and awarding of the sub-grants. Once awarded this person will monitor all financial and reporting activities of the various sub-grants including the progress reports and evaluation requirements. This person will also serve on the Statewide Reading Training and Coordinating Committee.

Expert Panel: Recognized experts in the areas scientifically-based reading research will be hired to provide training and guidance to the Statewide Reading Training and Coordinating

Cadre. Each member of the panel will be utilized up to six days. Initially they will be used to provide guidance for the sub-grant process and with the development of the training institutes. They may serve as trainers for the institutes if budget allows.

Travel and Training Expenses

Travel: The Project Coordinator and the 5 Cadre Trainers will travel extensively to cover the various geographic regions of Nebraska while preparing for and conducting the Institutes, providing technical assistance, and networking with ESUs and LEAs. Monies have also been allocated for travel to regional and national conferences to learn of the latest scientifically-based reading research and meet with national experts. (Nebraska's national Expert Panel has agreed to extend time and use the venue of National conferences as a means of meeting with the Cadre)

All travel will be reimbursed current rates as approved by the Nebraska Division of Administrative Services. Due to the large geographic size of Nebraska, they will need to drive great distances to participate in trainings and conferences.

Materials: Resource materials on scientifically-based reading research will be purchased for the Cadre to utilize when developing institutes, training modules, and follow-up sessions. Materials will also be available on a check-out basis for LEAs and ESUs.

Institutes

Materials: Extensive training materials will be provided to all participants of the Reading First Institutes. Each participant will be given a manual during the three-day trainings that will serve as an on-going resource in his or her classrooms. The manuals will be designed so that supplemental information may be added during the follow-up training sessions.

Institute Fees: Up to \$10.00/day per participant will be allocated for incidental costs to facilitate the trainings sessions.

Facilities/Equipment: The institutes will be held regionally across Nebraska and it will be necessary to rent some of the facilities and equipment.

Regional and Local Leadership (Grantee or Non-Grantee Sites)

Principals: Principals will attend regional follow-up sessions as an in-kind match.

Reading coaches/ESU Representatives: Up to 60 coaches from LEAs and ESUs will be identified. They will receive additional training and will be expected to attend regional follow-up and networking sessions. They will be paid a stipend of \$250/day to attend the two day pre-institute training or their schools will be reimbursed substitute pay.

Supplemental Training Materials: Additional materials on diagnosing and assessing learning difficulties, effective instructional strategies, and reading research will be purchased for the regional Reading Coaches' use. These materials may be shared between LEAs.

LEA Lead Teachers: Up to 200 lead teachers will be identified. Some of the Lead Teachers will be assigned full-time or part time depending on whether or not they are from a grantee school. They will receive additional training and will be expected to attend regional follow-up and networking sessions. They will be paid a stipend of \$100/day for their attendance at the required pre-institute training or their schools will be reimbursed substitute pay.

Quarterly Networking Sessions

Web Site Maintenance: The web site will be the key to keeping all participants up to date and informed about trainings, follow-up sessions, deadlines, grant requirements and the latest research on reading. It will be used extensively to facilitate awareness sessions and study groups.

Distance Technologies: The Nebraska Department of Education serves as a home base For several different types of distance learning technologies. The NDE has the capability to reach every school district with one-way, call-in technology as well as a system that provide two-way video, two-way audio to over 20 regional sites. New sites are being added on a regular basis. Web cast and interactive e-mail services also are available. Telecommunications services will be used to provide some of the training, follow up and networking opportunities as well as twice a year statewide information sessions. This reduces the number of miles participants will need to drive and makes the training available to librarians in all parts of the state. The rates are based on actual costs.

Follow-up Trainings:

At least once a year, a formal follow-up training will be held for two days and will be paid with funding from subsequent years.

3. STATE REPORTING AND EVALUATION**3. a. Evaluation Strategies**

Nebraska will work in partnership with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to evaluate the Reading First program. The University of Nebraska has extensive background experience in evaluation. There are currently several professors with expertise in scientifically-based reading research on board. Dr. Guy Trainin, Project Director/ Principal Investigator, is an assistant professor of Literacy at UNL. He focuses his research in the area of reading acquisition, reading disabilities, and research methods. He has conducted research using quantitative approaches focusing on evaluation of interventions with Latent and Hierarchical Linear Models as mediated by measures of program fidelity. During the past five years, Dr. Trainin has also been responsible for Spencer Foundation funded analyses related to a series of scientifically-based design experiments in early reading acquisition. He is currently serving as an external evaluator to a large, scientifically-based Federal demonstration grant in Literacy and Art in southern California. Dr. Trainin has collaborated in the creation and testing of several early literacy assessments currently in press. Both a general and special education teacher for more than 10 years, Dr. Trainin has also had extensive administrative experience in positions as a director of reorganization for a special education school and a project coordinator for a not-for-profit organization. He teaches pre-service teacher education courses as well as graduate courses in literacy research. He is a co-founder and co-director of The Great Plains Institute for Reading and Writing at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

In the following listing, Items 1-3 are essential to the evaluation process, while items 4-6 are desirable components and will be implemented if the budget allows. Funding will be provided through administrative and technical assistance dollars.

- 1) Resource, administrative support, and school atmosphere
- 2) Teacher fidelity, knowledge and self efficacy
- 3) Student achievement
- 4) Evaluation of assessment
- 5) Efficacy of professional development efforts
- 6) Formative support for schools

Nebraska Reading First grantees will be the priority-targeted schools for intensive evaluation. The secondary focus will include statewide professional development and training. The depth of the evaluation process will be determined by the amount of funding available. Therefore, two levels of evaluation will be attempted with "*Level one*" being essential and "*Level two*" based on funding support.

- 1) Resource, administrative support and school atmosphere

Level one:

- All grantee schools/districts will be surveyed twice during a school year—early fall and spring. The surveys will include teachers, administrators and regional coaches/ ESU representatives involved with the school. Potentially, parents could be included in the process. The survey questions will focus on school priorities (aligned to the district's school improvement plan), professional supports, and resource allocation. These surveys will be available online on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln server and supported with email reminders as well as possible paper alternatives where technology fails or does not exist.
- School improvement plans and other documents detailing goals and programs, as well as a list of available special services, will be collected from each school annually.

Level two:

- A random sub-sample of grantee schools stratified by demographic characteristics (special education, ELL, rural/urban/suburban ethnicity) will be evaluated each year in more detail. Interviews will be conducted with stakeholders comprised of teachers, administrators, coaches/ESU representatives, and parents/community representatives.

- 2) Teacher fidelity, knowledge and self efficacy

Level one:

- Twice a year, all participating teachers in grantee schools (Group I) will be surveyed regarding self-efficacy, and self-concept as reading teachers. Also twice a year, teachers (Groups II-VI) will be surveyed immediately following their participation at an Institute. Throughout the duration of the project, grantee teachers will be surveyed quarterly on their current reading instruction practices. These surveys will be developed as an online tool addressing all six areas of focus. This survey will require as little as 10-

20 minutes each month. Teachers will be prompted by e-mail to participate, and after completion, will be sent a short Reading First report as reinforcement.

- The lead teacher in each school will report summaries of all on-site reading team meetings concerning the district's initiatives for Reading First.

Level two:

- Reading coaches or lead teachers will conduct periodical observations in focus classrooms, chosen randomly in each grantee school, using two instruments—a structured quantitative observation tool (under development) and a qualitative tool. This will insure that qualitative measures will have a quantified component.

3) Student achievement

Reading First sub-grantees will be required to utilize assessment tools to screen and monitor student progress. Nebraska Reading First has identified *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills* (DIBELS 6th edition) (Kame'enui, E.J., Simmons, D.C., Good, R.H., and Harn, B.A., 2001) as a measure that will be used as a means of assessment and documentation for grades K-3. The *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test* 3rd edition (PPVT-3), the *Gray Oral Reading Test* (GORT-4), and Gates-MacGinitie will be used to identify student sight word capacity, vocabulary, fluency rate, and comprehension of text for specific grade levels and/or reading levels. These assessments will provide teachers with sufficient tools for efficient assessments on important reading skills that impact reading development.

Nebraska Reading First grantee schools will use multiple assessments for screening, diagnostic, progress monitoring, and measuring outcomes. Kindergarten teachers will screen students in the fall of each year using the DIBELS initial sounds, letter naming, and nonsense section. Kindergarten children will also use the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test to screen for language vocabulary. Progress monitoring will be scheduled for January and April with DIBELS initial sounds, segmentation, and letter naming sections. Progress monitoring and outcome measures will overlap and be administered using the same sections of DIBELS with a pretest in September and a posttest in April/May.

At level one, screening will be done in September using phoneme segmentation, letter naming, nonsense fluency, oral reading from DIBELS, vocabulary with the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, and the comprehension portion from GORT-4. Progress monitoring will be done in January and April using DIBELS: initial sound, phoneme segmentation, letter naming, nonsense words, and oral reading fluency. Pre and post tests will be administered for outcome measures. Gates-MacGinitie will be used as a tool for measuring oral language concepts, letter/sound correspondences, and basic story words. Fluency will be assessed through the DIBELS oral reading fluency while the GORT-4 will measure comprehension.

At the beginning of each year, screening information will be gathered at grades two and three in fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension using DIBELS – oral reading fluency, PPVT-III – vocabulary, and GORT-4 – comprehension. Diagnostic assessments will be administered for those students that need more intensified testing and after data is analyzed by teachers. Progress monitoring will target fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The GORT-4 will be used to screen, monitor progress, and provide

data for outcome measures in fluency and comprehension. This assessment will be administered three times during the year (September, January, and April/May). The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test will be used to screen and/or diagnose vocabulary while the Gates-MacGinitie will be used for progress monitoring and outcome measures.

The Gates MacGinitie was chosen as a reliable and valid tool to monitor progress. The Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 (K-R 20) was used to compute reliability coefficients for item difficulty. These reliabilities are shown in the tables along with maximum possible scores, average item difficulties (p-values), raw score means, standard deviations (SDs), and standard errors of measurements (SEMs). In addition to the K-R 20 reliability coefficients, alternate-forms reliability coefficients are also provided in the Technical Report for Forms S and T but not represented in the table below. The following table provides the Raw Score Summary Statistics for Levels Pre-Reading; Beginning Reading; Level 1, Grade 1; Level 2, Grade 2; and, Level 3, Grade 3.

	Max Score	Average p-value	Mean	SD	SEM	K-R 20
Level PR, Spring of Kindergarten						
Subtest 1, Literacy Concepts	20	0.82	16.44	3.11	1.4	0.80
Subtest 2, Oral Language/Phonological Awareness	20	0.67	13.32	4.36	1.8	0.83
Subtest 3, Letters and Letter-Sound Correspondences	30	0.82	24.55	4.85	1.6	0.89
Subtest 4, Listening (Story) Comprehension	20	0.66	13.23	4.32	1.8	0.82
Total	90	0.75	67.54	15.07	4.0	0.93
Level PR, Fall of Grade 1						
Subtest 1, Literacy Concepts	20	0.86	17.15	2.63	1.2	0.79
Subtest 2, Oral Language/Phonological Awareness	20	0.69	13.79	4.24	1.7	0.83
Subtest 3, Letters and Letter-Sound Correspondences	30	0.87	26.04	3.73	1.3	0.87
Subtest 4, Listening (Story) Comprehension	20	0.71	14.29	4.20	1.8	0.81
Total	90	0.79	71.27	13.39	3.5	0.93
Level BR, Fall of Grade 1						
Subtest 1, Letter-Sound Correspondences: Initial Consonants	15	0.64	9.56	3.64	1.5	0.84
	15	0.57	8.60	3.62	1.5	0.83
Subtest 2, Letter-Sound Correspondences: Final Consonants	15	0.46	6.85	3.65	1.5	0.82
	25	0.66	16.60	5.74	2.0	0.88
Subtest 3, Letter-Sound Correspondences: Vowels	70	0.59	41.61	15.09	3.4	0.95
Subtest 4, Basic Story Words						
Total						
Level BR, Spring of Grade 1						
Subtest 1, Letter-Sound Correspondences: Initial Consonants	15	0.84	12.53	2.34	0.9	0.84
	15	0.74	11.05	3.13	1.3	0.84
Subtest 2, Letter-Sound Correspondences: Final Consonants	15	0.71	10.60	3.30	1.4	0.83
	25	0.86	21.51	3.70	1.2	0.89
Subtest 3, Letter-Sound Correspondences: Vowels	70	0.80	55.69	11.84	2.6	0.95
Subtest 4, Basic Story Words						
Total						
Level 1, Grade 1 (no Fall scores)						
Level 1, Grade 1 Spring						
Word Decoding	43	0.63	26.92	10.37	2.5	0.94
Comprehension	39	0.63	24.42	9.28	2.5	0.93
Total	82	0.63	51.34	19.75	3.9	0.96
Level 2, Grade 2 Fall						
Word Decoding	43	0.65	27.90	10.65	2.6	0.94
Word Knowledge	43	0.55	23.81	10.14	2.9	0.92
Comprehension	39	0.65	25.23	8.95	2.5	0.92
Total	125	0.62	76.94	28.25	4.9	0.97

	Level 2, Grade 2 Spring					
Word Decoding	43	0.75	32.40	9.45	2.3	0.94
Word Knowledge	43	0.66	28.34	9.91	2.6	0.93
Comprehension	39	0.75	29.14	7.64	2.2	0.92
Total	125	0.72	89.88	24.83	4.3	0.97
	Level 3, Grade 3 Fall					
Vocabulary	45	0.58	26.27	10.12	2.7	0.93
Comprehension	48	0.57	27.19	11.20	3.0	0.93
Total	93	0.57	53.46	20.37	4.1	0.96
	Level 3, Grade 3 Spring					
Vocabulary	45	0.64	28.95	10.07	2.7	0.93
Comprehension	48	0.64	30.56	10.65	2.8	0.93
Total	93	0.64	59.51	19.88	4.0	0.96

MacGinitie, W.H., MacGinitie R.K., Maria, K., Dreyer, L., (1995). *Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests Technical Report, Forms S and T 4th Edition*, Riverside Publishing, Houghton Mifflin Company, pp.54-55 and 64-69

All Gates-MacGinitie tests are designed to measure students' knowledge of concepts related to reading, their knowledge of decoding skills and word meanings, and their understanding of what they read. The tests are not intended to measure how fluently the students can respond to the test questions or how quickly they are able to read the comprehension passages. A general achievement test should provide meaningful scores for the great majority of students, so that only the students with extremely high or extremely low achievement cannot obtain scores fully indicative of their achievement level. The difficulty of the questions was carefully estimated prior to the field test to enable the designers to create final test forms with the desired difficulty characteristics. The test forms are appropriate for the range of reading achievement found in most classes across the country. The out-of-level norms encourage the use of an easier or more difficult test level. The table shows the ceiling and floor data for Form S Levels 1, 2, and 3.

Test	Grade 1 Test Level 1	Grade 2 Test Level 2	Grade 3 Test Level 3
	Fall:	Ceiling PR of a Perfect Score	
Word Decoding		98	
Word Knowledge/Vocabulary		99	99
Comprehension		99	99
	Fall:	Ceiling PR of One Wrong	
Word Decoding		94	
Word Knowledge/Vocabulary		99	99
Comprehension		98	99
	Fall:	Floor PR of a Chance Score	
Word Decoding		6	
Word Knowledge/Vocabulary		10	7
Comprehension		12	13
	Spring:	Ceiling PR of a Perfect Score	
Word Decoding	99	94	
Word Knowledge/Vocabulary		99	99
Comprehension	99	98	99
	Spring:	Ceiling PR of One Wrong	
Word Decoding	96	86	
Word Knowledge/Vocabulary		96	99
Comprehension	97	95	99
	Spring:	Floor PR of a Chance Score	
Word Decoding	6	2	
Word Knowledge/Vocabulary		5	5
Comprehension	15	4	5

The ceiling and floor data for Levels PR and BR subtests use stanines with correspondence to raw scores. Level PR is designed to be relatively easy, so teachers can most effectively help locate students whose background from learning to read is weak or will likely need special attention. Level BR tests basic elements of reading – letter sound correspondences and the reading in context of very common words that may not follow basic decoding rules. The specific data is also documented in the Technical Report and will be shared with trainers, administration, coaches and lead teachers when training for administering the tests.

For the Assessment Plan please see the following charts with timeline. All information is also included in Appendix J.

Nebraska Reading First Assessment Plan 2003-2004 Sub-Grant Districts

Kindergarten				
Component	Screening Fall: September	Diagnostic As needed	Progress Monitoring Winter: January Spring: April	Outcome Measures Pretest: September Posttest: May
Phonemic Awareness	DIBELS • Initial Sounds • Fluency	Yopp-Singer • Phoneme Segmentation	DIBELS • Initial Sound Fluency • Segmentation Fluency	DIBELS • Initial Sound Fluency • Segmentation Fluency
Phonics	DIBELS • Letter Naming Fluency • Nonsense Fluency		DIBELS • Letter Naming Fluency	DIBELS • Letter Naming Fluency
Fluency				
Vocabulary	PPVT-III	PPVT-III		PPVT-III
Comprehension				

Grade 1 Level				
Component	Screening Fall: September	Diagnostic As needed	Progress Monitoring Winter: January Spring: April	Outcome Measures Pretest: September Posttest: May
Phonemic Awareness	DIBELS • Phoneme Segmentation Fluency	Yopp-Singer • Phoneme Segmentation	DIBELS • Initial Sound Fluency • Phoneme Segmentation Fluency	Gates-MacGinitie • Oral Language Concepts
Phonics	DIBELS • Letter Naming Fluency • Nonsense Fluency		DIBELS • Letter Naming Fluency • Nonsense Word Fluency	Gates-MacGinitie • Letter/Sound Correspondences
Fluency	DIBELS • Oral Reading Fluency	GORT-4 Comprehension	DIBELS • Oral Reading Fluency	DIBELS • Oral Reading Fluency
Vocabulary	PPVT-III	PPVT-III		Gates-MacGinitie • Basic Story Words
Comprehension	GORT-4 • Comprehension	GORT-4 • Comprehension		GORT-4 • Comprehension

Grade 2 Level				
Component	Screening Fall: September	Diagnostic As needed	Progress Monitoring Winter: January Spring: April	Outcome Measures Pretest: September Posttest: May
Phonemic Awareness		DIBELS • Phoneme Segmentation		
Phonics		DIBELS • Letter Naming Fluency • Nonsense Fluency		Gates-MacGinitie • Word Decoding
Fluency	DIBELS • Oral Reading Fluency	GORT-4 • Rate, Accuracy, Fluency	GORT-4 • Rate, Accuracy, Fluency	GORT-4 • Rate, Accuracy, Fluency
Vocabulary	PPVT-III	PPVT-III	Gates-MacGinitie • Word Knowledge Test	Gates-MacGinitie • Word Knowledge Test
Comprehension	GORT-4 • Comprehension	GORT-4 • Comprehension	GORT-4 • Comprehension	GORT-4 • Comprehension

Grade 3 Level				
Component	Screening Fall: September	Diagnostic As needed	Progress Monitoring Winter: January Spring: April	Outcome Measures Pretest: September Posttest: May
Phonemic Awareness		DIBELS • Phoneme Segmentation		
Phonics		DIBELS • Letter Naming Fluency • Nonsense Fluency		Gates-MacGinitie • Word Decoding
Fluency	DIBELS • Oral Reading Fluency	GORT-4 • Rate, Accuracy, Fluency	GORT-4 • Rate, Accuracy, Fluency	GORT-4 • Rate, Accuracy, Fluency
Vocabulary	PPVT-III	PPVT-III	Gates-MacGinitie • Word Knowledge Test	Gates-MacGinitie • Vocabulary Test
Comprehension	GORT-4 • Comprehension	GORT-4 • Comprehension	GORT-4 • Comprehension	GORT-4 • Comprehension

Nebraska's statewide assessment system (STARS) is unique and every effort will be made to incorporate the strength of the system when evaluating K-3 reading achievement for Reading First. Each district in the state has created criterion-referenced assessments that are aligned to the Nebraska State Standards for grades K-12. They follow a well-established set of quality criteria to insure the credibility of outcome measurements. Nebraska has worked extensively with the Buros Institute of Mental Measurement located at the University of Nebraska on this process (see pages 4-6 of this application for complete details).

Level one:

- All grantee schools/districts will update the evaluation team on assessment results of ALL students, those tested as well as those not tested, along with demographic information (gender, Title I, special education status, ELL status, attendance, mobility, teacher, school, grade, ethnicity). In cases where target schools are nested in a district with uniform assessments, the district will provide normative data (means, modes, and variance) for the rest of the district as a tool for local comparison.

Through the STARS initiative, Nebraska school districts have created criterion-referenced assessments aligned to the Reading Standards. These assessments, together with other outcome measures, will be used to gather data aligned to district outcomes (see Appendix J) for non-grantee schools/districts. Assessment data will be examined by demographic variables, school variables, as well as by program, year, and cohort. Another measure will be the statewide data collected from the STARS assessment of the 4th grade reading standards. The 2000-2001 data listed on page 11 of this application will be used as baseline data. Increased levels of achievement will be scrutinized as an indication of

increased effectiveness of reading instruction in grades K-3. This will be monitored throughout the six years of the project.

Level two:

- Contingent upon budgetary availability, a stratified sub-sample of schools, both inside and outside of Reading First, will administer an additional assessment with national norms that will enable the evaluation team to explore overall trends and comparisons with greater confidence.

4) Evaluation of assessment

In conjunction with the Buros Institute of Mental Measurement, housed at University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL), the data collected by schools/districts will be used to evaluate reliability and validity of the used measures, and whenever possible, create equating procedures that will help in making statewide comparisons.

5) Efficacy of professional development

Each professional development effort will be followed by an immediate post survey as an evaluative tool. In addition, four to six weeks later, an online survey will be conducted to measure the maintenance of implementation of the professional development efforts. Participants in Reading Institutes will be surveyed again at the end of the school year. A random sample from participating districts will be surveyed for the third-year report and also for the final report to show sustainability of research-based practices.

6) Formative support for schools

A key part of any successful evaluation process is a buy-in from the participants who benefit from the process. Therefore, if the budget allows, as set milestones in the Reading First initiative are achieved (2-3 times a year), the evaluation team will make data available to participants in order to support school improvement efforts. These will include annual CD/online access to a low-threshold data presentation of all aggregated levels of analysis. Secured data views will enable schools and districts to explore their individual progress and identify strengths and weaknesses. This will enable districts to monitor and adjust instruction and/or interventions to meet the immediate needs of students through increased support or scaffolding that will assist districts in making adequate yearly progress.

Throughout the state, team leaders will be supported by using “distance learning” connections available at UNL:

- Live conferencing/polycam, etc.
- Online presentations, including support for synchronized and unsynchronized discussions/ support
- If funding is available, UNL will develop a “distance learning” course tailor-made for on-site lead teachers focusing on scientifically- based methods of reading instruction. This will be designed to include data analysis and the use of data to drive instruction.

Program Evaluation Timeline

Fall: September-October

- Conduct surveys to building teachers, administrators, regional coaches/ESU representatives, possibly parents. Surveys will gather information about perceptions about school priorities, professional supports, and resource allocation
- Collect School Improvement Plans and other documentation detailing goals and programs and available special services
- Survey participating teachers in grantee schools regarding self-efficacy and self-concept as reading teachers
- Survey participating teachers from grantee schools about reading practices they are using
- Collect reports from grantee schools' lead teachers detailing on-site reading team meetings about Reading First
- Begin monitoring assessment for student achievement activities at the grantee schools
- Survey teachers completing Reading First Institutes during the second semester of the previous school year a second time

Fall/Winter: November-December

- Survey participating teachers from grantee schools about reading practices they are using
- Survey participants of Reading First Institutes
- Collect reports from grantee schools' lead teachers detailing on-site reading team meetings about Reading First
- Monitor assessment for student achievement activities at the grantee schools
- Provide formative support to school participants through reports of data-collection and evaluation processes

Winter/Spring: January-February

- Survey participating teachers from grantee schools about reading practices they are using
- Collect reports from grantee schools' lead teachers detailing on-site reading team meetings about Reading First
- Monitor assessment for student achievement activities at the grantee schools
- Provide formative support to school participants through reports of data-collection and evaluation processes

Spring: March-May

- Survey participating teachers from grantee schools about reading practices they are using
- Survey teachers completing Reading First Institutes
- Survey teachers completing Reading First Institutes during the first semester a second time
- Collect reports from grantee schools' lead teachers detailing on-site reading team meetings about Reading First
- Collect student assessment data from grantee schools
- Provide formative support to school participants through reports of data-collection and evaluation processes.

Summer: June-August

- Survey participants of Reading First Institutes
- Analyze data collected by grantee schools to evaluate reliability and validity of the used measures
- Collect annual reports filed by grantee schools.
- Compile data collected during the previous school year and prepare report

- Submit report to State Reading First Leadership Team to consider continuation of funding for each project
- Prepare three and six year reports for U.S.D.E.

Unscheduled data collection events:

- Collection of survey information following each Reading First professional development event. Re-survey the participants four-six weeks following to measure maintenance of implementation
- Evaluation cadre and state project staff will review evaluation information on a regular basis
- Conduct no less than two site visits during the first year of a grant project, and no less than one per the remainder of the life of the project.

The Cadre will review the evaluation information on a regular basis. For those LEAs and schools not making significant progress, Reading First will follow the Nebraska State Board of Education policy, *Using School Performance Information for Improving Learning*, which was approved April 4, 2003 (see Appendix P).

3. b. State Reporting

Nebraska's Reading First will establish a system of monitoring and support for grantee schools/districts through follow-up sessions and on-site visits. The follow-up sessions will be held quarterly, and Cadre personnel will conduct no less than two on-site visits the first year and no less than one on-site visit annually for the remainder of the grant period. Once on site, the Cadre make sure programs are being implemented with fidelity, integrity, quality, and adherence to scientifically-based reading research.

All sub-grantees will be expected to file written annual reports of progress. These reports will require detailed information on local achievement including progress on the number of students 1-3 that are reading below grade level disaggregated by low-income, major racial/ethnic groups, LEP, and special education. In addition, the reports will contain information on progress towards the grantee's professional development goals, as well as an in-depth accounting of all expenditures proposed in their grant budgets. The grantee's annual report will serve as a monitoring tool for the Cadre during the on-site visit. Changes may be made to the report as a result of the findings. All reports will be collated and reviewed by the Reading Leadership Team at their April meeting each year. Decisions about continuation and discontinuation of funding to Reading First schools/districts will be based on the school building's performance. The Cadre will monitor the disaggregated data to see which LEAs have significantly increased the percentage of students reading at grade level or higher.

Schools/districts that, despite the resources provided by Reading First, are not showing improvement after two years will be discontinued from the project. Furthermore,

schools/districts that are not in compliance with the agreements of the Reading First application, the assurances, and the timely completion of data collection will be discontinued. The Cadre will monitor grantees' progress at their monthly meetings.

The SEA will also provide annual reports to the US Department of Education. All grantees will be required to provide data for the federal reports. Statewide reading achievement will be provided through the STARS assessment data. Annual year-end progress reports will be submitted to Washington per Reading First requirements, including reporting the percentage of students reading at grade level or above. These data will be disaggregated according to low income, major racial/ethnic groups, LEP, and special education sub-groups. Full 3-year and 6-year evaluation reports will be submitted per regulation.

3. c. Participation in National Evaluation

Nebraska Reading First assures that, when funded, it will be willing to participate in the National Reading First Evaluation. Grantee schools/districts will also commit to participating in the National evaluation through assurances in their application. The RFP rubrics are designed such that it is not possible to score a "Meets Standard" in the Evaluation Rubric without agreeing to participate (see pages 47-48).

4. CLASSROOM LEVEL IMPACT

4. a. Key Reading First Classroom Characteristics

A Nebraska Reading First classroom will be an environment that displays the following key characteristics:

- The classroom teachers will utilize a comprehensive reading program that teaches the five basic components of reading instruction (phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, fluency, vocabulary). The classroom teacher will continue to improve his/her ability to use components of this program to meet individual student needs through ongoing participation in staff development activities.
- The teacher will utilize a coherent instructional design that includes explicit instructional strategies, a coordinated instructional sequence, ample practice opportunities, and aligned student materials.
- The classroom teacher will demonstrate the ability to meet individual student needs as determined by regular, ongoing assessment and evaluation of all students. Professional

development will help teachers improve their abilities to collect and interpret data and use this information to guide daily instruction. Small group, large group and individual instruction will be utilized on a flexible basis, based on the activity and needs of the students.

- The reading program will be the primary focus of instruction for a minimum of 90 minutes per day. However, reading and writing will be taught and meaningfully utilized throughout the entire school day.
- There will be clear expectations for student reading achievement and clear strategies for monitoring progress.
- The small groups in which students participate for instruction will be flexible in nature, allowing for the ever-changing needs of the students as they learn to read. Students will be members of groups that convene to work on skills needed as determined by assessment/evaluation information that is collected on an ongoing basis by the classroom teacher.
- Students will demonstrate active engagement in learning activities because they are interesting and meaningful. The activities will incorporate opportunities for reading and writing as students learn across all content areas throughout the school day. There will be a variety of reading/writing activities that are connected to the essential components of reading instruction and to clearly articulated academic goals (Nebraska Reading/Writing Standards).
- It will be every teacher's goal to have all of his/her students reading at or above "grade level" by the end of the school year. Assessment/evaluation information will identify special needs of students not at grade level, and teachers will utilize intervention strategies appropriate for each student based on their individual needs.

4. b. Coherence

Nebraska's Reading First has infused collaborative efforts throughout this proposal. Reading First will work diligently with No Child Left Behind legislation and other federal, state, and local initiatives to ensure consistency and coherence of all programs leading to increased success for all Nebraska's students.

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